

The Application of Socratic Dialogue in Agentic Group Guidance: An Effective Path to Better Emotional Regulation

Mharchelya Mharchelya¹, Rezki Hariko², Zadrian Ardi³, Nurfarhanah Nurfarhanah⁴

¹ Department of Guidance and Counseling, Faculty of Education, Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia

*Corresponding author, e-mail: hariko.r@fip.unp.ac.id

Abstract

Recent research data shows that adolescents experience poor emotional conditions. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of interventions to improve students' emotional regulation at SMAN 10 Padang. The study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design and a time series design. The research respondents were nine students of SMAN 10 Padang in the 2025/2026 academic year, selected using purposive sampling. Research data were collected using the Student Emotional Regulation Scale, which was compiled based on the Likert scale model. The data were analyzed descriptively, followed by a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test using SPSS 24.0 for Windows to see the changes before and after the treatment was given, and then using the N-Gain Score to determine the effectiveness of the treatment. The results showed that agentic group guidance using the Socratic dialogue technique was effective in improving adolescents' emotional regulation through a reflective approach, social support, and self-confidence reinforcement, so it can be recommended as a sustainable emotional learning strategy in schools. The test results showed that agentic group counseling using the Socratic dialogue technique had an average N-Gain of 0.64. This means that the implementation of agentic group counseling using the Socratic dialogue technique to improve students' emotional regulation at SMA Negeri 10 Padang was quite effective.

Keywords: Adolescents, Agentic Perspective, Counseling, Minangkabau, Psychoeducational Group

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Introduction

Adolescence (12–18/22 years) is a crucial transition period that is closely linked to physical, psychological, and social changes, as well as emotional challenges that affect emotional regulation skills (Coret et al., 2022; Ellis & Sidebotham, 2023; Santrock, 2007; Wardani & Asih, 2022). During this phase, the roles of parents and schools become important foundations in shaping emotional management skills, developing empathy, and building healthy social interactions (Hashmi & Fayyaz, 2022; Rachman et al., 2023; Tcharkhalashvili, 2023). However, the intense dynamics of mood swings often make individuals prone to difficulties in controlling their emotions, making decisions, and maintaining the quality of social relationships (Gregorová et al., 2024; Hurlock, 1991; Schweizer et al., 2020). This vulnerability can trigger psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and maladaptive behavior (Kweon, 2023), as explained in data from the WHO (2024) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (2021), which show a high prevalence of emotional disorders in adolescents. In Indonesia, research at SMK Multimedia Tumpang confirmed that most students have low levels of emotional regulation (Diajeng, Indari, & Mustriwi, 2021). This phenomenon underscores the importance of effective interventions to help adolescents manage their emotions better.

Emotional regulation is an important skill that involves an individual's ability to recognize, understand, and control the emotions they feel in certain situations (Gross & Fortd, 2024; Kim, Han, & Hyang, 2024, 2024). Factors such as age, parenting styles, and social relationships influence the development of emotional regulation in adolescents (Novita, 2022; Widyadari & Fitriani, 2023). Adolescents who have the ability to manage their emotions well tend to have high emotional intelligence, better academic achievement, and more positive social relationships (Parry et al., 2021). However, adolescents who are unable to regulate their emotions can become trapped in negative emotions, such as stress, anger, and depression, which affect

their quality of life (Hasmarlin & Hirmaningsih, 2019). Research by (Tumanggor & Lase, 2024) and (Putri, Darmayanti, & Menanti (2023) shows that students who can manage their emotions tend to have better relationships and higher academic achievement. Therefore, developing emotional regulation skills is very important to help adolescents overcome life's challenges and build a more balanced and happy life.

Counselors play an important role in helping students deal with personal, social, and academic problems that affect their emotional well-being. One service that has proven effective is group counseling, as students are more comfortable sharing their experiences in a group setting (Berg et al., 2018; Gladding, 2020). In this context, an agentic approach can be used to emphasize the development of students' self-agency so that they can improve their emotional regulation. Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986, 2005) explains that individuals can control their emotions through mutually beneficial social interactions, and that the influence of peers is often stronger than that of parents through friendship, group quality, and moral discussions (Morris et al., 2011). This principle of behavioral change is in line with cognitive, behavioral, and constructivist approaches (Mahoney, 2003), with three main characteristics, namely anticipatory thinking, self-reactivity, and self-reflectivity based on self-efficacy (Bandura, 2018). Group counseling allows the self-agency mechanism to function optimally because the counselor as group leader and peers as members act as environmental factors that support the strengthening of emotional regulation (Bandura, 1999). In addition, this service helps students develop social-emotional skills, such as communication and self-control, through discussions of relevant topics that foster positive attitudes and strengthen empathy (Fauziah et al., 2022; Salsabilla & Daharnis, 2022).

Through direct experience, group interaction, and self-reflection, agentic group counseling can encourage students to develop self-control and self-efficacy (Hariko, 2019). In line with previous studies, specific approaches such as agentic have been proven to be more effective in improving students' social and emotional skills than group counseling without a specific approach (Sari Tobing et al., 2023). The agentic approach in group counseling can also be enriched with the Socratic dialogue technique, which is closely related to cognitive behavioral therapy. This technique applies a series of tiered and progressive questions that encourage students to think independently through active engagement with the counselor (Carey & Mullan, 2004; Overholser, 1993). Socratic questions cover various forms, such as recall, translation, interpretation, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, which are aimed at fostering rational problem-solving skills (Gower & Stokes, 2019; Levin, 1961; Sugrue, 1998). Thus, this approach is expected to improve adolescents' emotional regulation and help them manage their emotions more adaptively. Therefore, the current study aims to examine the effectiveness of agentic group guidance using the Socratic dialogue technique in improving adolescents' emotional regulation.

Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design through a time series design involving pre- and post-treatment measurements (pretest-posttest). The study respondents consisted of 9 students (aged 15–18 years; 6 females) from a total of 604 students at SMAN 10 Padang in the 2025/2026 academic year. This selection used the purposive sampling technique, based on the results of the Adolescent Emotion Regulation Scale analysis compiled based on the Likert Scale model. From the available data, the majority of students had high emotional regulation (63.25%), but 30.46% of students were in the moderate category and 0.50% in the low category. Because this research intervention focused on helping students with moderate and low emotional regulation, nine people from these groups were selected as participants. The data were analyzed inferentially using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test with the help of the SPSS 24.0 for Windows program to test the difference in scores before and after treatment. In addition, the N-Gain Score analysis was used to assess the effectiveness of agentic group counseling intervention with the Socratic dialog technique in improving students' emotional regulation.

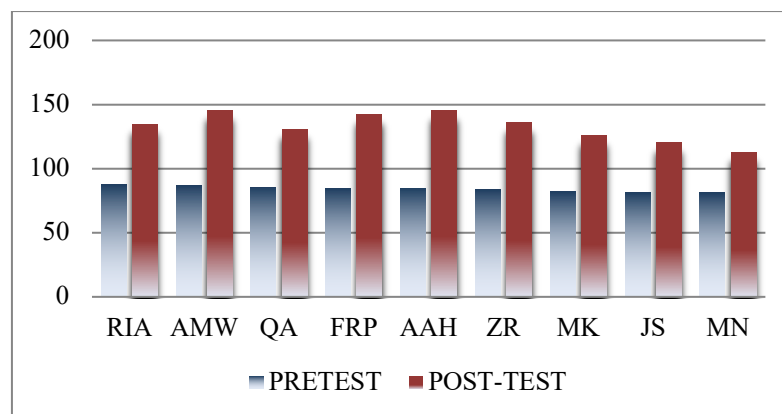
Result and Discussion

The overall comparison of pretest and posttest scores in changing respondents' attitudes toward emotional regulation before and after being given treatment in the form of agentic group guidance services using the Socratic dialogue technique can be seen in Table 1 below, as follows.

Table 1. Comparison of Students' Emotion Regulation Pretest and Posttest Scores

No	Initial	Pretest Score	Posttest Score	Difference
1	RIA	87,8	135,0	47,3
2	AMW	87,3	145,8	58,5
3	QA	86,0	131,0	45,0
4	FRP	85,0	142,3	57,3
5	AAH	85,3	145,5	60,3
6	ZR	84,0	136,0	52,0
7	MK	82,3	126,0	43,8
8	JS	81,8	120,5	38,8
9	MN	81,5	113,0	31,5
	Total	760,75	1195,00	434,25
	Average	84,53	132,78	48,25

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that there was an increase in scores between the pretest and posttest results after the agentic group guidance service using the Socratic dialogue technique was provided. The average pretest score of the respondents was 84.53, while the average posttest score of the respondents was 132.78, with a difference of 48.25. This increase shows that agentic group counseling services using the Socratic dialogue technique have a positive impact on improving emotional regulation in adolescents. In general, these results indicate that respondents experienced significant development in understanding, managing, and regulating their emotions. A comparison of the overall pretest and posttest scores can be seen visually in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Histogram of Students' Emotional Regulation Pretest and Posttest Data**

The stability of respondents after the implementation of agentic group counseling services using the Socratic dialogue technique was assessed by comparing the overall pretest and posttest scores. This analysis aims to determine the extent to which the changes that occurred were consistent and reflected a continuous improvement in emotional regulation. The pretest scores reflect the initial condition before treatment, while the posttest scores describe the results after receiving treatment. Details of the comparison results are shown in Figure 2 to clarify the pattern of change that occurred in the respondents.

The figure above illustrates the development of the emotional regulation scores of the nine students who participated in the agentic group counseling service using the Socratic dialogue technique. The O_1 to O_4 scores were relatively stable and did not vary greatly between respondents, indicating that conditions tended to be uniform. After the treatment/intervention was given (marked with the symbol X), the emotional regulation scores generally increased. This increase was consistent from points O_5 to O_7 , where each respondent showed a trend of increasing or maintaining their previous achievements. Overall, although there were slight variations between individuals, the graph shows a consistent pattern of change from before to after the treatment.

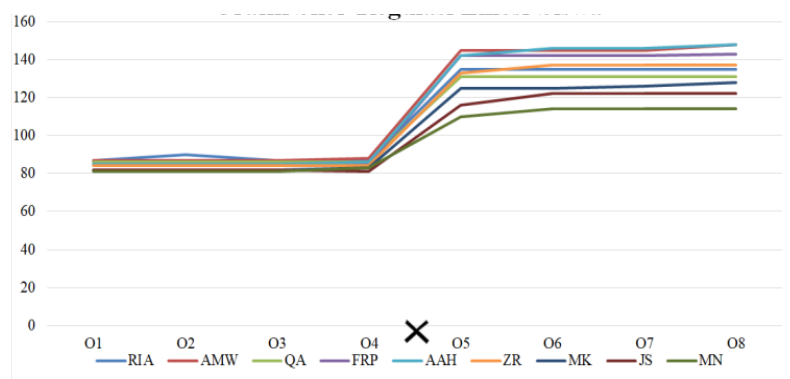


Figure 2. Time Series Graph of Research Subject Design

Based on the previous explanation, the results of the pretest and posttest data processing can be interpreted as showing a difference in the total scores obtained between the pretest and posttest scores. Hypothesis testing was performed using statistical analysis with the help of SPSS version 24.0 through the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, which is a non-parametric analysis technique to compare two paired measurements to determine the significant differences between them. The hypothesis to be tested in this study is "There is a significant difference in the emotional regulation of students in the experimental group before and after participating in agentic group counseling services using the Socratic dialogue technique".

This hypothesis assumes that there is an increase in posttest scores compared to pretest scores after the intervention is given. The results of the Wilcoxon test calculations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for Differences in Students' Emotional Regulation Improvement on the Pretest and Posttest

Test Statistics	
	Post-test - Pre-test
Z	-2.666b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.008

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
b. Based on negative ranks.

Based on Table 2 above, the Z value is -2.666 and the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) is 0.008. Because the significance value is smaller than the significance level of 0.05, the decision taken is H_0 and accept H_a . Thus, there is statistical evidence that agentic group counseling services using the Socratic dialogue technique have a significant effect on students' emotional regulation levels.

H_0 (null hypothesis) in this study states that there is no significant difference in students' emotional regulation before and after being given agentic group counseling services using the Socratic dialogue technique. Meanwhile, H_a states that there is a significant difference between before and after being given the treatment. Based on the test results obtained, H_a is accepted. To determine the direction of the score change, whether it increased or decreased, refer to Table 3 as follows.

Table 3. Direction of Differences in Students' Emotional Regulation Pre-test and Post-test

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest - Pretest	Negative Ranks	0a	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	9b	6.00	66.00
	Ties	0c		
	Total	9		

a. Posttest < Pretest
b. Posttest > Pretest
c. Posttest = Pretest

Based on Table 3, it shows that all 9 participants were in the positive ranks with an average rank (mean rank) of 6.00. This means that all nine respondents experienced an increase in scores from the pretest to the posttest after participating in the agentic group counseling service. These results indicate a significant change in improving adolescent emotional regulation. This change is demonstrated by the higher posttest scores compared to the pretest scores, reflecting the effectiveness of the intervention provided.

Furthermore, the results of the N-Gain test data processing on the pretest and posttest of students' emotional regulation in Table 4 are as follows.

Table 4. Results of N-Gain Test Data Processing

No	Initial Name	N-Gain	N-Gain (%)
1	RIA	0.65	65
2	AMW	0.80	80
3	QA	0.61	61
4	FRP	0.76	76
5	AAH	0.81	81
6	ZR	0.68	68
7	MK	0.56	56
8	JS	0.50	50
9	MN	0.40	40
Average		0.64	64

Based on Table 4, it can be analyzed that the percentage of the average N-Gain is 0.64 or equivalent to 64%, which is interpreted as a "fair" level of effectiveness. Thus, it can be concluded that the implementation of treatment in the form of agentic group guidance services using the Socratic dialogue technique to improve students' emotional regulation at SMA Negeri 10 Padang is "fairly effective." Individually, respondents showed varying results, with the highest N-Gain value of 0.81 (81%) and the lowest of 0.40 (40%). Although there were differences between individuals, overall the intervention can be considered "quite effective" in improving participants' emotional regulation in important aspects of emotional regulation.

This condition reflects the limitations of students in recognizing and managing their emotions, especially when facing social and academic pressures. Low emotional regulation is often influenced by the developmental factors of adolescence, where they are still in the process of understanding themselves and their environment (Aldao et al., 2010; Schweizer et al., 2020). In addition, the inability to manage stress can worsen the emotional condition of adolescents, which has implications for the emergence of impulsive behavior (Bhat, Kumar, & Abhinit, 2020). High school students often experience emotional instability that can interfere with their ability to regulate emotions. In addition to the physical and psychological changes that occur during adolescence, the social environment, especially the family, plays an important role in students' ability to regulate their emotions. Research (Mharchelya & Sukmawati, 2023) found that low emotional regulation skills in high school students are associated with their tendency to engage in cyberbullying behavior. Therefore, developing emotional regulation skills can serve as a deterrent to this negative behavior in the digital environment. Families that are unsupportive or conflict-ridden can hinder the development of emotional regulation skills in adolescents (Dwistia et al., 2025).

The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test show that there is a significant difference between students' emotional regulation before and after participating in agentic group counseling using the Socratic dialogue technique. This difference indicates that agentic group counseling intervention using the Socratic dialogue technique successfully improves students' ability to identify, understand, and control their emotions in a more adaptive manner. This improvement in emotional regulation is in line with findings showing that group counseling helps students gain emotional support and social interaction, enabling them to develop healthier self-control strategies (Salsabiella & Lesmana, 2025).

The increase in emotional regulation scores can be explained through the group dynamics process. In the early stages, students were less active in sharing their experiences, but gradually began to show openness in expressing their opinions. Group interactions provided a sense of security and opportunities to learn from the experiences of others, which was proven to improve social-emotional skills (Gladding, 2020). Recent research shows that positive emotional experiences managed within a group contribute to consistent improvements in students' emotional regulation (Corey, 2017). Research (Hariko et al., 2023) suggests that an agentic approach can improve prosocial behavior in adolescents. Additionally, group counseling can strengthen the affective and cognitive aspects of adolescents when facing emotional stress

(Rachman et al., 2025). This is also in line with research finding that group counseling can improve students' psychological well-being through social learning and behavioral modeling mechanisms (Hulukati et al., 2022). Therefore, the findings of this study support the idea that agentic group counseling interventions can be a useful method to help adolescents develop more flexible emotion regulation.

Improved emotional regulation is also in line with Bandura's social cognitive theory (1986), which states that individuals learn from social interactions through reflection and observation. In this service, students not only evaluate personal experiences, but also internalize the emotional management strategies demonstrated by their peers. This strengthens self-efficacy, which is the belief that they are capable of controlling their emotional responses in various situations (Bandura, 2005). With increased self-efficacy, students are more confident in facing emotional pressure.

The application of the Socratic dialogue technique further strengthens the effectiveness of the intervention. Students' active involvement in group discussions is also an important factor that drives an increase in posttest scores. Through the Socratic dialogue technique, students are encouraged to think critically, express their opinions, and empathize with their peers' experiences (Sugrue, 1998). This process supports the formation of stable emotional regulation because it involves cognitive, affective, and social aspects simultaneously (Ivcevic & Eggers, 2021). The multi-level questions asked by the counselor encourage students to think critically, explore self-understanding, and develop independent solutions in managing their emotions. This approach is in line with the theory of emotional regulation, which emphasizes the importance of self-awareness in managing affective responses (Gross & Fortd, 2024). Recent research confirms that the use of reflective questions in cognitive-behavioral counseling can improve emotional regulation skills and problem-solving abilities in adolescents (Novianti et al., 2023; Vyskočilová & Praško, 2012; Wahyudiansah et al., 2022). Thus, the combination of agentic group guidance and Socratic dialogue has proven to be an effective counseling strategy to help adolescents improve their emotional regulation skills.

The effectiveness of the intervention is further supported by the results of the N-Gain Score analysis, which indicates an improvement in students' emotional regulation following the intervention, categorized as moderately effective. Although there were variations in development between individuals, the general pattern shown was a consistent improvement after participating in the service. This is in line with research that found that variations in the effectiveness of counseling interventions are often influenced by factors such as psychological readiness, previous emotional experiences, and the quality of social relationships that adolescents have (Wang & Sheibani, 2024). Environmental support, especially the role of peers, is also an important factor that influences the effectiveness of group counseling interventions (Tobing & Sari Septiningtyas, 2024; Umar & Masnawati, 2024). Contemporary studies even confirm that adolescents with high social support are better able to make optimal use of counseling services to develop emotional regulation skills (Vienlentina, 2021). Additionally, the group dynamics created through open discussions allow each student the opportunity to share emotional experiences, thereby strengthening empathy and self-awareness (Waltman et al., 2020). Thus, even though the level of emotional regulation development varies between individuals, the effectiveness of the intervention can still be interpreted as a positive achievement in the context of improving adolescents' emotional skills.

Improvements in emotional regulation occurred consistently across all respondents, although there were variations in effectiveness levels among individuals. The results of the study show that no respondents experienced a decline in scores; all showed positive graphs. This consistency confirms that Socratic dialogue provides a relevant and continuous emotional learning experience. In line with the study (Sari Tobing et al., 2023), group counseling services with a specific approach proved to be more effective than services without a specific approach.

Overall, this discussion shows that the factors causing low emotional regulation before the intervention included limited self-reflection, lack of positive social-emotional experiences, and weak self-efficacy. After the intervention, these factors were addressed through reflective learning, group support, and self-efficacy reinforcement. The significant increase in pretest to posttest scores indicates the success of the intervention in developing students' emotional regulation. Thus, agentic group counseling using Socratic dialogue techniques can be recommended as an effective strategy in schools to improve adolescents' emotional regulation.

Conclusion

The results showed that before being given agentic group guidance services using the Socratic dialogue technique, the emotional regulation of students at SMA 10 Padang was still relatively low due to limited self-reflection skills, a lack of positive social-emotional experiences, and low self-efficacy, making it difficult for them to manage their emotions when facing academic and social pressures. After the intervention, their emotional regulation scores increased significantly from moderate to high, indicating an improvement in the students' ability to recognize, manage, and regulate their emotional responses through reflection, critical discussion, and group interaction. The group learning process provided opportunities for students to internalize their peers' emotional control strategies, build self-confidence, and consistently apply affective management, which strengthened the stability of their emotional regulation in daily life. Thus, agentic group counseling services using the Socratic dialogue technique have proven effective in improving adolescents' emotional regulation through a reflective approach, social support, and self-confidence reinforcement, and can therefore be recommended as a sustainable emotional learning strategy in schools.

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