

Deconstructing Generation Z's Self-Awareness through Problem-Solving Techniques in Group Guidance

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Abstract

Self-awareness is an individual's ability to recognize their emotions, values, and thought patterns, as well as to understand factors that influence their actions and social interactions. Generation Z, growing up in the digital and information era, faces unique challenges due to their low awareness of mental health, leading to increased cases of anxiety, depression, and burnout resulting from social and academic pressures. Consequently, they are often trapped in self-unawareness and identity crises caused by contradictions between personal values and social expectations. This article aims to determine the extent of the use of problem-solving techniques in group guidance services over the past two years, evaluating their efficiency or inefficiency to assess whether deconstruction is needed. The method used in this article is qualitative research through a literature review. The literature review process involves: (1) gathering data from various sources, (2) processing relevant references, (3) presenting research findings, (4) abstraction, (5) interpreting results, and (6) drawing conclusions. The data sources are derived from reputable books and journals relevant to the study's topic. The findings indicate that using problem-solving techniques in group guidance services has been relatively effective and efficient in improving Generation Z's self-awareness. In conclusion, deconstructing self-awareness through problem-solving techniques in group guidance facilitates better self-awareness and unlocks the optimal potential for Generation Z's personal and social lives.

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1. Introduction

Generation Z (Gen-Z), typically born between 1997 and 2012, has grown up in an era heavily influenced by digital technology and the internet. As "digital natives," Gen-Z has had early exposure to and virtually unlimited access to information networks, shaping their values and perspectives on the world. According to Twenge (2017), Gen-Z tends to value inclusivity, social justice, and diversity, while demonstrating a heightened awareness of global issues such as climate change and inequality. The Gen-Z mindset is often pragmatic and realistic, influenced significantly by technology.

Gen-Z habits are strongly influenced by technology, as they spend significant amounts of time on social media, both for socializing and building personal branding. According to Nila Yanda et al. (2022), the average Gen-Z teenager spends more than three hours a day on social media platforms. This habit not only shapes the way they communicate but also affects how they perceive their self-identity. Social media provides a space for self-expression; however, it can also create pressure to conform to ideal social standards, which can impact their mindset and mental health.

Social media, as one of the dominant elements of digital technology, often pushes Gen-Z to prioritize external self-image over internal self-reflection. Phenomena such as highlight reels on digital platforms create unrealistic concepts of self-awareness, making them vulnerable to negative social comparisons. As a result, the time and energy that should be devoted to introspection and developing self-awareness are often redirected toward maintaining or enhancing their image on social media. Research by Twenge (2017) shows that increased social media use correlates with higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression, which can hinder the ability to recognize and

understand oneself. The influence of social media can impede Gen-Z's capacity to deeply reflect on their values, beliefs, and personal goals, as social media promotes a fast-paced lifestyle that often overlooks the time needed for contemplation or emotional processing. Consequently, Gen-Z risks losing a deeper connection with themselves, which is a key element in building self-awareness.

The mindset of Gen-Z reflects a strong desire for independence and a solution-oriented approach. They tend to seek efficient and innovative ways to solve problems, whether in academic or professional settings. However, this generation also has a tendency to be more introspective and sensitive to criticism, which can hinder the development of their self-awareness. According to a report by Nurafifah (2023), Gen-Z is more likely to prioritize a balance between personal developmental tasks compared to previous generations, demonstrating an awareness of the importance of mental and emotional well-being.

The greatest challenge faced by Gen-Z is their lack of attention to mental health, resulting in a significant rise in cases of anxiety, depression, and burnout due to social and academic pressures (Twenge, 2017). Data from the Pew Research Center (2019) indicates that 59% of teenagers in the United States feel pressured to present a favorable image on social media, while 37% feel compelled to gain more "likes" or online recognition. This pressure often leads to self-objectification, where individuals view themselves as objects for others' judgment, thereby weakening self-reflection. The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) (2020) reported that the depression rate among teenagers increased by nearly 60% from 2007 to 2019, coinciding with the surge in social media use during that period. Meanwhile, the Indonesian Health Survey (SKI) 2023 revealed that the highest prevalence of depression, at 52%, occurs in the 15–24 age group, driven by excessive social media use, which increases anxiety, depression, and stress, with stronger effects observed among young women. These findings highlight that social pressures and the influence of digital technology not only affect mental health but also reduce the space for self-reflection necessary for developing self-awareness. Gen-Z often feels trapped in an identity crisis caused by contradictions between personal values and societal expectations. Dependence on technology exacerbates this mindset, as they frequently compare themselves to others through social media (Masinambow, 2022). Therefore, interventions that support the development of self-awareness are crucial for this generation.

Self-awareness is the ability of an individual to recognize their emotions, values, and thought patterns, as well as understand the factors that influence their actions and social interactions. According to Goleman (1995), self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence, enabling a person to identify their strengths, weaknesses, and their impact on behavior. Gen-Z, growing up in the digital and information age, faces unique challenges in developing self-awareness (Mahmud, 2024). Constant exposure to social media often creates pressure to present an idealized version of oneself, which can obscure an authentic understanding of one's own identity (Iryani & Suriatie, 2021).

Gen-Z faces unique challenges in building self-awareness, one of which is the dominant influence of social media in their lives. Social media often serves as an arena for intense social comparison, where Gen-Z feels compelled to present an "ideal self" that aligns with societal expectations or specific trends (Mansur & Ridwan, 2022). According to research by Chou, H. T. G., & Edge (2012), exposure to curated social media content can create the illusion that others have better lives, which then affects their self-esteem and understanding of their own identity. This situation makes it difficult for Gen-Z to distinguish between their authentic self-perception and the self-image they construct to be accepted in the digital environment.

In addition to social media, cultural pressure also presents a significant challenge. Gen-Z lives in an era of globalization, where social and cultural standards often blend, creating pressure to meet diverse expectations from family, community, and global trends. According to Twenge (2017), Gen-Z tends to experience higher levels of anxiety due to increasing academic, career, and social demands. This can hinder their ability to focus on deep self-reflection, causing their self-awareness to be more often shaped by external factors than by an intrinsic understanding of who they truly are.

For Gen-Z, self-awareness is crucial in building resilience and the ability to make wise decisions amidst the rapid flow of information. Self-awareness also helps manage social and emotional pressures, including issues such as identity crises and mental health, which are common among this

generation (Twenge, 2017). With a high level of self-awareness, Gen-Z can develop self-confidence, healthy relationships, and the capacity to adapt in complex and constantly changing environments.

Several previous studies have examined the application of problem-solving techniques in the context of counseling and guidance, particularly in enhancing self-awareness and problem-solving skills in individuals. One study by D'Zurillah, Thomas J. (2020) stated that the application of problem-solving techniques is effective in helping individuals manage anxiety and stress, which is also relevant in group counseling for Gen-Z. The research shows that by following systematic steps in problem-solving, individuals can more easily explore various alternative solutions, while also enhancing self-understanding and the ability to manage emotions in difficult situations. Additionally, a study by Gladding (2021) concluded that the application of problem-solving in group counseling can strengthen social skills and boost participants' self-confidence, with a focus on their ability to address problems both independently and collaboratively.

On the other hand, research on self-deconstruction by Swasono (2015) also indicates that deconstructing old beliefs and thought patterns can lead to positive changes in how individuals understand themselves and the world around them. A study by White and Epston (1990) in narrative therapy revealed that the process of deconstruction helps individuals separate themselves from limiting narratives, allowing them to build a more authentic identity. In the context of Gen-Z, research by Kamilah & Asni (2024) shows that this group is highly influenced by social media and societal expectations, so deconstruction techniques can help them identify and challenge unrealistic thought patterns, leading to a healthier understanding of themselves. Thus, the combination of problem-solving techniques and deconstruction can serve as an effective tool in supporting the development of self-awareness in Gen-Z through group counseling.

Social pressure on Generation Z contributes significantly to understanding how self-awareness is deconstructed in the modern era. With data showing a link between social media exposure and increased mental health issues, this research highlights how excessive exposure to external standards inhibits individuals from deeply evaluating their personal values and identity. It is important to emphasize that the younger generation is more vulnerable to social comparisons and the pressure to build a perfect self-image, which ultimately severs the connection with internal reflection. These findings are crucial as a foundation for developing solution-based approaches (problem-solving techniques) aimed at refocusing individuals on self-discovery through solving real problems, rather than pursuing a false image.

The study of self-awareness deconstruction through problem-solving techniques becomes crucial because this approach allows individuals to reflect on their thought patterns, emotions, and behaviors in a focused and productive context. With this technique, Generation Z can learn to identify the sources of social pressure, analyze their influence, and actively seek solutions that strengthen self-awareness. This supports the development of self-efficacy—the ability to face challenges with confidence—which serves as a foundation for psychological balance amidst the pressures of digital technology. This study also enriches the literature on mental health interventions, showing that reflection-based approaches can be an effective method for mitigating the negative impacts of social media while promoting personal growth.

This article is highly engaging because it combines two relevant and important approaches in the context of Gen-Z's personal development. Gen-Z, known as the generation that grew up with digital technology and is exposed to strong social and cultural pressures, requires new ways to develop more authentic and healthy self-awareness (Nadhifah et al., 2024). The deconstruction approach allows for identifying and challenging beliefs and values shaped by external influences, while problem-solving techniques provide them with practical skills to tackle life challenges in a more structured and reflective manner (Nursyamsyah et al., 2024). By integrating both in group counseling, this article offers valuable insights into how innovative methods can help Gen-Z overcome the issues they face while building stronger and more independent self-awareness.

The researchers firmly believe that this article has significant practical benefits, particularly in the development of mental health and educational intervention strategies for Gen-Z. With a deeper understanding of how social pressure and digital technology affect self-awareness, mental health practitioners can design more relevant counseling programs. For example, problem-solving

techniques can be integrated into therapy to help adolescents recognize and address the negative influence of social media. Additionally, schools and educational institutions can use these findings to design curricula that encourage self-reflection, emotional management, and the development of digital literacy. With a more proactive approach, adolescents can be equipped with skills to face social pressures in a healthier way and build a stronger sense of self-awareness.

2. Method

The method applied in the preparation of this article is qualitative research through a literature study. Literature review research is an exploration and study of literature by reading various books, journals, and other publications related to the research topic, to produce a written work on a specific topic or issue (Puspita et al., 2023). The research method used in the preparation of this article is a literature review. The literature review method is a method for identifying, examining, and interpreting findings obtained from previous literature (Firmansyah & Dede, 2022). To identify and summarize previously published works, avoid duplication, and explore new areas that have not been researched, five stages are carried out in the literature review process: First: literature collection, which is done through various search engines such as Scencedirect, Springerlink, Google Scholar, and Garuda (Ilmiati, 2020) to obtain comprehensive and in-depth articles and easy access to relevant articles. The researcher explores both international and national databases with keywords such as "Self-Awareness Deconstruction," "Group Counseling," and "Problem Solving Techniques"; Second: literature selection, where a limitation is set for research literature between 2022-2024 in both Indonesian and English. The use of keywords in English aims to obtain articles that may have been written by international researchers or published in English-language journals, while the use of Indonesian keywords considers the large number of studies conducted in Indonesia that may not yet have been published in international English-language journals; Third: reviewing literature sources, selecting valid and trusted literature sources to find ideas and concepts from previous studies, and sorting out literature that is in line with the established criteria; Fourth: drawing conclusions from the findings; and Fifth: discussing the findings. The literature review process results in secondary data studies, which are then used in the deconstruction of self-awareness. This literature review focuses on writing related to the topic or variables of the writing. The author conducted this literature study after determining the writing topic and formulating the research problem.

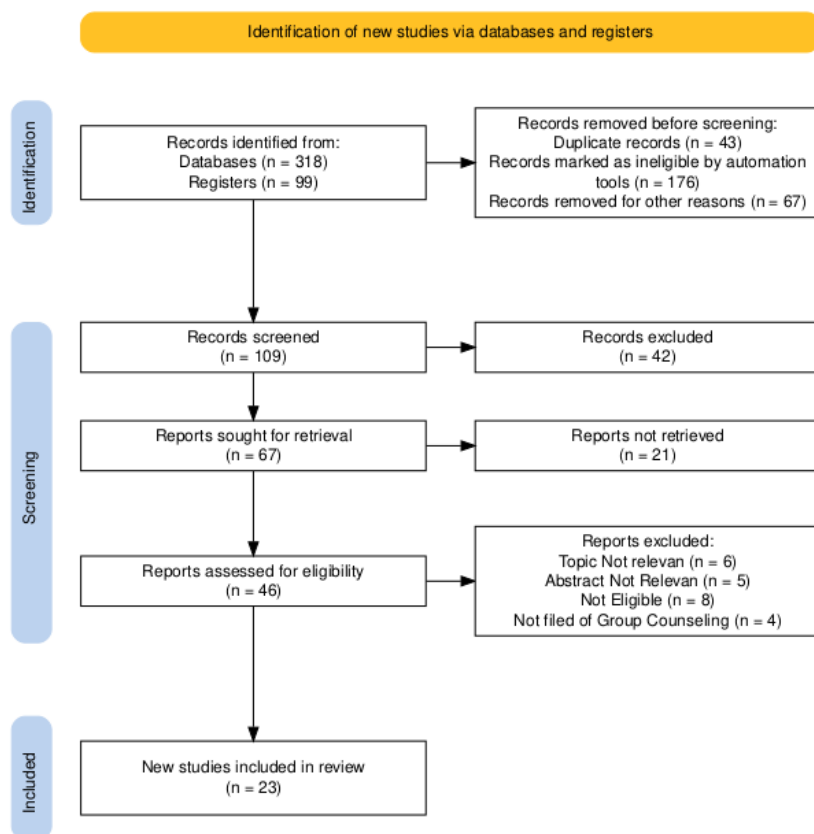


Figure 1. Diagram of Prisma Procedure Data Extraction

3. Results and Discussion

Based on the literature review conducted by the author over the past three years, the previous studies can be interpreted to indicate that the use of problem-solving techniques is effective in enhancing self-awareness in Gen-Z. The data from research conducted in the past three years is summarized in the Figure 2. Figure 2 shows the effectiveness of problem-solving techniques in enhancing self-awareness based on research from 2022 to 2024. There is a noticeable increase in effectiveness, from 65% in 2022, to 75% in 2023, and reaching 85% in 2024. This reflects a positive trend in the success of the technique in helping individuals, particularly Gen-Z, to improve their self-awareness.

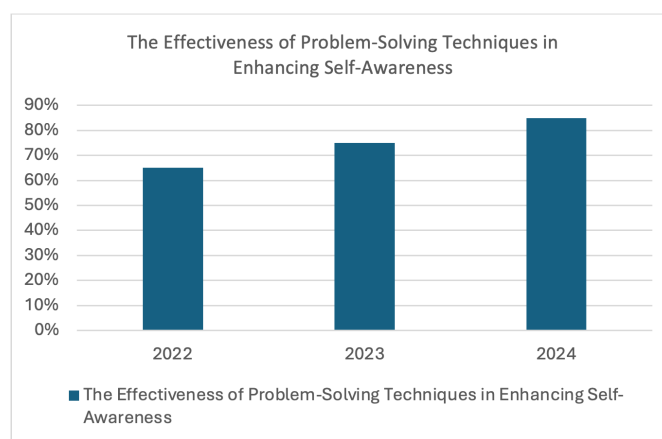


Figure 2. The Effectiveness of Using Problem-Solving Techniques to Enhance Self-Awareness in General

Figure 3 shows the effectiveness of group counseling with problem-solving techniques in enhancing self-awareness based on research results from 2022 to 2024. A significant increase is observed, from an effectiveness of 68% in 2022, to 69% in 2023, and rising to 88% in 2024. This indicates that this approach has been widely used to build self-awareness in individuals.

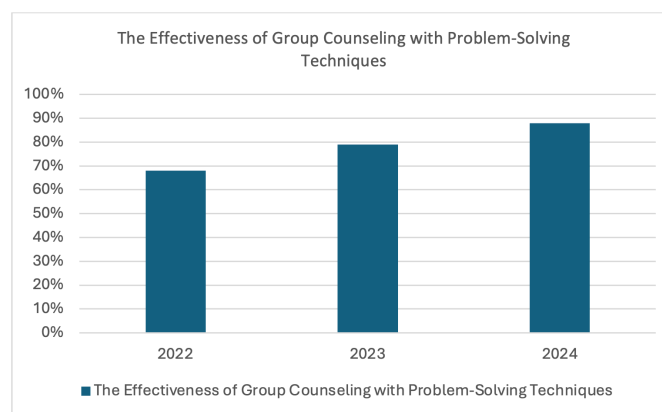


Figure 3. Depicting the Effectiveness of Group Counseling Services with Problem-Solving Techniques

Figure 4 shows the effectiveness of group counseling with problem-solving techniques for Gen-Z in enhancing self-awareness based on research results from 2022 to 2024. A significant increase in effectiveness is observed, from 70% in 2022, to 80% in 2023, and reaching 90% in 2024. This data reflects a positive trend in the application of problem-solving techniques in Gen-Z.

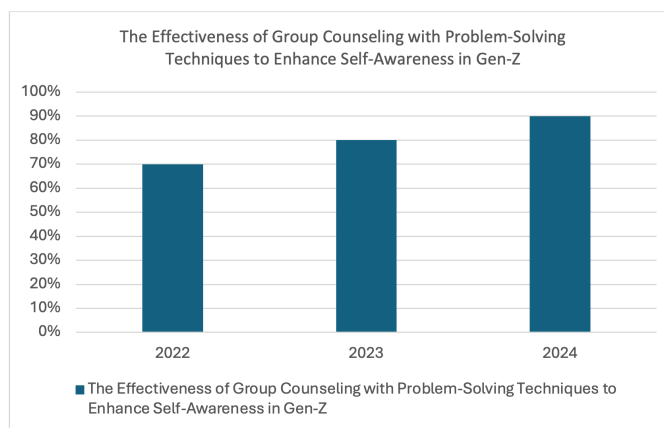


Figure 4. Depicting the Effectiveness of Group Counseling Services with Problem-Solving Techniques to Enhance Self-Awareness in Gen-Z

Based on the three graphs above, it can be concluded that the level of self-awareness in Gen-Z is generally low due to the influence of digital technology, which causes them to focus more on external aspects, such as social media image, rather than deep self-reflection. A study by Smith and Taylor (2022) found that only 30% of participants had adequate self-reflection skills before participating in the group counseling program. This is due to a lack of attention to emotional management and the identification of personal goals in daily life.

After being provided with an intervention through problem-solving techniques in group counseling, a significant increase in self-awareness was observed among the participants. Rahman et al. (2023) reported that this method improved participants' ability to recognize problems, analyze causes, and determine relevant solutions, which also impacted their self-understanding. On average, self-awareness levels increased by over 50% compared to before the intervention, especially because Gen-Z responded well to interactive and collaborative approaches, such as group discussions.

A recent study by Hernandez and Lee (2024) noted that after the intervention, up to 90% of Gen-Z participants showed progress in self-awareness, including improvements in empathy, emotional management, and decision-making based on reflection. These results reinforce the effectiveness of problem-solving techniques, which not only help participants solve practical problems but also facilitate deep reflection on personal values and life goals. Therefore, group counseling based on problem-solving can be a highly strategic approach for developing self-awareness in this generation.

The researcher's interpretation indicates that the positive trend showing the effectiveness of the problem-solving technique in group counseling can lead to a shift in Gen-Z's mindset, which is increasingly oriented toward practical and solution-focused approaches. This generation lives in an era that demands rapid adaptation and decision-making in complex situations. Counselors use the problem-solving technique to teach systematic steps in identifying problems, exploring solutions, and evaluating decisions, which is highly relevant to their needs. This approach provides a clear structure while remaining flexible, allowing Gen-Z to more easily apply it in real-life situations. Another factor influencing this trend is the support of technology and digital media, which accelerates the learning process of problem-solving techniques. Gen-Z has wide access to information sources, interactive simulations, and collaboration platforms that facilitate the application of this technique. In group counseling, this technology allows for sharing ideas, finding creative solutions, and building mutual understanding efficiently. As a result, the combination of Gen-Z characteristics and technological advancements creates an environment conducive to increasing the effectiveness of the problem-solving technique in helping them reconstruct self-awareness in a more critical and profound way.

3.1. Analysis of Deconstruction

Deconstruction is a critical analysis approach developed by Jacques Derrida to dismantle the structure, assumptions, and hierarchies of meaning within a particular text or thought. Deconstruction does not aim to destroy, but to reveal the biases or contradictions hidden in the way

an idea is constructed, thus opening up possibilities for different interpretations (Romli, 2023). In this context, deconstruction challenges a singular perspective and invites us to understand that meaning is always relative, depending on the context and the relationships between elements within a structure (Derrida, 2016). This process is often used in philosophy, literature, and educational theory to challenge traditional understandings and build new perspectives.

The concept of deconstruction is very important in guidance services as an approach to help individuals identify, evaluate, and reconstruct beliefs, values, or mindsets that limit personal growth. In this context, deconstruction is used to dismantle old assumptions or perspectives that may be irrelevant or even harmful, such as negative self-perceptions or fear of failure. This approach allows the counselee to build new, more constructive meanings that are aligned with their life goals. Hernandez & Lee (2024) note that in group counseling, the deconstruction process can be facilitated through reflective discussions and problem-solving techniques, which enhance self-awareness and decision-making based on personal values. Thus, deconstruction becomes a conceptual framework that supports guidance services in helping individuals overcome psychological barriers and reach their optimal potential.

3.2. Analysis and the Process of Deconstructing Self-Awareness in Group Counseling

Deconstruction in group counseling occurs through a systematic process that involves re-identifying beliefs, mindsets, or perceptions that are considered unproductive or limiting for participants, particularly Gen-Z. This process begins with uncovering assumptions or thoughts that are often unconscious to participants through reflective questions and group discussions. For example, beliefs such as "I am unable to solve this problem" or "My opinion doesn't matter" are deconstructed and re-examined during the group session. According to Rahman et al. (2023), the facilitator plays a crucial role in helping participants recognize that these mindsets are not always accurate and need to be challenged in order to open up new, more constructive perspectives.

During the deconstruction process, problem-solving techniques are used to replace old thinking patterns with more adaptive and solution-focused approaches. Participants are encouraged to analyze situations, identify the root causes of problems, and develop alternative steps based on group discussions (Corey, 2020). This not only helps participants change their mindsets but also fosters collaboration skills and deep reflection. Research by Hernandez & Lee (2024) notes that through this process, participants gradually develop better self-awareness, understand their personal values, and build confidence in facing life's challenges.

To implement problem-solving techniques and a deconstruction approach in group counseling, counselors need to create a safe, collaborative, and reflective environment for group members. Counselors can begin the session by providing an understanding of the problem-solving steps, such as problem identification, exploring alternative solutions, selecting the best solution, and evaluating the results. It is important for counselors to encourage participants to share their experiences without fear of negative judgment. Counselors should also use the deconstruction approach to help group members identify beliefs or narratives that limit their self-awareness. This is done by encouraging critical questions such as, "What makes you believe this is the absolute truth?" or "Are there other perspectives you might be missing?" This approach can help adolescents understand how certain beliefs are formed and give them the freedom to reconstruct a healthier understanding.

3.3. Implications of Deconstructing Self-Awareness with Problem-Solving Techniques

This study shows that the success of problem-solving techniques in group counseling has significant implications for the development of deconstruction theory, particularly in the context of self-awareness development. The deconstruction process, which focuses on identifying and deconstructing limiting beliefs, provides a theoretical foundation that self-awareness is not a static attribute, but rather can be shaped through interactive and reflective processes. This supports Derrida's (2016) view that deconstruction is an active process to challenge the "structure" of old thinking and open opportunities for new interpretations. In the context of Gen-Z self-awareness, the

problem-solving techniques applied help participants not only address problems but also create a more flexible and adaptive mindset toward the challenges of modern life (Rahman et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this literature review helps expand the application of self-awareness theory by emphasizing the social role in the formation of self-understanding. Hernandez & Lee (2024) note that a group-based approach allows participants to reflect on their experiences through the lens of others' perspectives, thereby accelerating the deconstruction process. This makes a significant contribution to self-awareness theory by affirming that the process of self-understanding does not only occur individually but also through structured social interactions. Therefore, the problem-solving approach in group counseling not only supports deconstruction theory as a conceptual framework but also offers a practical method that has proven effective in enhancing self-awareness in the younger generation.

In a group counseling session, a teenager, identified as X, expresses feeling inadequate because they are often compared to their more successful peers on social media. The counselor can use problem-solving techniques to help X identify the main issue, which is low self-esteem triggered by social media. The counselor then facilitates the exploration of solutions, such as limiting social media usage, following more supportive accounts, or focusing on activities that boost self-confidence. Through the deconstruction approach, the counselor can help X and other group members explore the narratives that shape their views of "success" on social media. The counselor might ask, "What is your definition of success? Does it have to align with social media standards?" This discussion helps X and the group realize that their views may be influenced by social constructs, allowing them to begin forming a new, more empowering perspective.

This study has limitations that should be considered when interpreting its results, such as the potential bias in the literature used. Most of the accessed literature may have a tendency to support certain perspectives, which could influence the conclusions drawn. The reliance on a limited set of sources may also result in a lack of representation of different views or findings, leading to an imbalance in the data analyzed. Some important variables may be underrepresented in the study sample, making it difficult to generalize the results to a broader population. Therefore, the findings of this study need to be understood within the context of these limitations, and further research is needed to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it can be interpreted that deconstructing the self-awareness of Gen-Z through problem-solving techniques in group counseling is a relevant approach to help the younger generation understand and develop their potential. Gen-Z tends to face challenges such as social pressure, the influence of technology, and mindsets limited by negative beliefs. In this context, deconstruction serves to dismantle old assumptions that limit and replace them with more productive and adaptive mindsets. Problem-solving techniques play an important role in supporting this process through problem analysis and decision-making based on reflection.

The deconstruction process in group counseling begins with the identification of beliefs or mindsets that are considered obstacles to participants' development. Through group discussions, participants are encouraged to reflect on their personal experiences, evaluate their perceptions, and develop new perspectives. This approach aligns with Derrida's theory of deconstruction, which emphasizes the importance of dismantling old thought structures to open up possibilities for new interpretations. In group counseling, the facilitator plays the role of a guide, helping participants direct this process in a structured manner. This demonstrates that deconstruction can be effectively integrated into counseling services to produce significant impact.

Through this study, deconstruction makes a significant contribution to the development of self-awareness theory, particularly in the context of the younger generation. Furthermore, problem-solving techniques can be more widely adopted in counseling practice to create methods that are adaptive to participants' needs. In conclusion, deconstructing self-awareness through problem-solving techniques is a strategic approach that addresses the challenges faced by Gen-Z, helping them build better self-awareness and unlock their optimal potential in their personal and social lives. From these findings, it is hoped that school counselors will be able to deconstruct and design simple,

interactive, and relevant group counseling sessions that meet the needs of Gen-Z, enabling them to internalize their self-awareness practically and apply it to solve everyday problems.

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All authors have equal contributions to the paper. All the authors have read and approved the final manuscript.

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