

Impact of Gestalt and Reality Counseling on Reducing Junior High School Students' Anger in Social Media

Julia Vika Andriani Marpaung^{1*}, Muslihati¹, Imanuel Hitipeuw¹, Anabelie V. Valdez²

¹Universitas Negeri Malang, Semarang St., No. 5 Malang, East Java, 65114, Indonesia

²Mindanao State University, Marawi, 9700 Lanao del Sur, Philippines

*Corresponding author, email: naziyaalmahyraa@gmail.com

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Abstract

Adolescent emotional development can be enhanced by effectively managing conflicts in everyday life, such as those encountered on social media. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality group counseling with Expressive Writing techniques in mitigating anger emotions in students' social media interactions. Conducted as an experimental research with a pre-test-post-test two-treatment design, the study utilized purposive sampling to select 16 eighth-grade students from State Junior High School 2 Wagir, Malang Regency, Indonesia who demonstrated high levels of anger in social media. The participants were divided into two groups: one receiving Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques and the other Reality group counseling with Expressive Writing techniques. Data on anger emotions were collected using a specific anger instrument and analyzed with a t-Test. The findings indicate that: (1) Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques is effective in reducing anger emotions in students on social media; (2) Reality group counseling with Expressive Writing techniques is effective in reducing anger emotions in students on social media; (3) Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques is more effective than Reality group counseling with Expressive Writing techniques in reducing anger emotions in students on social media. The outcomes of this research may provide school counselors and researchers with additional references for the application of Gestalt group counseling in reducing anger emotions in social media among students.

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1. Introduction

Social media comprises websites and applications that enable users to share anything with the broader community up to a global scale (Aqilah et al., 2023). Social media serves as a venue for individuals to display and view content as part of their lifestyle or life itself (Alisa et al., 2023). According to the Ministry of Communication and Information (Kemenkominfo, 2022), in Indonesia, 95% of internet usage is dedicated to accessing social media. Adolescence is a period of heightened emotional peaks and immature adulthood (Fitri & Adelya, 2017), necessitating attention as this phase often entails a greater expression of negative emotions than positive ones (Thontowi et al., 2014). Anger, a basic emotion, must be well managed to prevent it from becoming a factor in mental health and social issues (Mertoglu, 2018).

In a preliminary study at State Junior High School 2 Wagir, Malang, Indonesia, researchers found that out of 130 students, 63% (82 students) were female and 37% (48 students) were male, all of whom experienced anger in social media. Identified triggers for this anger included: 30% verbal aggressiveness as an anger release reaction, 30% of students posting statuses while angry, 20% reacting spontaneously to unpleasant conditions on social media, and 20% of students being unable to control themselves while using social media. Consistent with the findings of Zuhdi & Nuqul, (2022), 65.4% of emotional outbursts are displayed through behaviors or actions, either verbal or nonverbal. The anger expressed on social media is demonstrated through words, videos, and emoticons, serving as an outlet for individuals' anger, thereby prompting reactions from others and potentially damaging relationships (Martin & Vieaux, 2016). Thus, managing anger emotions is essential to reduce both verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviors (Carolina & Tjakrawiralaksana, 2021).

Managing anger emotions is a responsibility of school counselors and is part of the educational programs and facilities provided to students. According to the Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation, counselors are qualified to provide guidance and counseling services in schools (Permendikbud, 2014). The issue of anger on social media among students can be mitigated by providing Gestalt counseling with rehearsal techniques and Reality counseling with expressive writing techniques. Firstly, Gestalt counseling can help counselees achieve awareness and take responsibility for all life choices, thus reaching maturity (Corey, 2017). The rehearsal technique trains behaviors or actions from negative to positive in social media usage (Ricky, 2023). The success of this counseling is evident from the significant reduction in anger levels (Kumar, 2017), seen in the counselees' enhanced control and self-development (Meichenbaum, 2017).

Secondly, Reality Counseling involves assisting counselees by acknowledging life realities responsibly and fulfilling their basic needs more effectively (Corey, 2017). Research has shown that those whose basic needs are met tend to be more confident with reality, thus behaving more cautiously and avoiding triggers of anger (Fathimatuzzahro, 2018a). Expressive writing helps individuals understand themselves and their lives (Pratiwi, 2022). By employing this technique, students are expected to cathartically release all feelings and thoughts from past experiences of anger (Leung et.al, 2023).

The researcher believes that Gestalt counseling with rehearsal techniques and Reality counseling with expressive writing techniques are essential to explore as means to help students control angry expressions, understand the impact and benefits of social media for mental health including depression, anxiety, and anger (De Wet, 2020), and maintain good interpersonal relationships (El Fiah & Anggralisa, 2017). Therefore, this research aims to address three issues: (1) whether Gestalt counseling with Rehearsal techniques is effective in reducing anger in social media; (2) whether Reality counseling with Expressive Writing techniques is effective in reducing anger in social media; (3) whether there is a difference in effectiveness between Gestalt counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality counseling with Expressive Writing techniques in reducing anger when using social media.

2. Method

This study is an experimental research with a pre-test and post-test two-treatment design (Creswell, 2015). It involves two variables: (1) Gestalt Counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality Counseling with Expressive Writing techniques as the independent variables, and (2) anger emotions in social media use as the dependent variable. The research was conducted at State Junior High School 2 Wagir in Malang Regency, Indonesia, selected based on preliminary studies indicating that students were unable to control their anger, both verbally and non-verbally, as confirmed through interviews with school counselors. The population of the study consisted of 130 eighth-grade students at State Junior High School 2 Wagir. Purposive sampling was used to select participants with high levels of anger in social media, who were then subjected to Gestalt Counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality Counseling with Expressive Writing techniques.

Pretest and posttest data were collected using an anger scale developed by the researchers. Before deploying the scale as a data collection tool, it underwent two stages of validation: expert review and field testing. The expert review was conducted to assess the appropriateness of the items in representing the anger construct on social media based on indicators, sub-indicators, and descriptors. The anger scale included aspects of (1) trait anger, (2) state anger, (3) anger expression, and (4) anger control. The expert review was analyzed using the inter-rater agreement model, resulting in a score of 0.97. The field test was conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument. Validity testing using Pearson Correlation resulted in five items being dropped, leaving 32 items as valid, and the reliability test yielded a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.830.

Treatment was administered by school counselors over six counseling sessions for each group, using Gestalt Counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality Counseling with Expressive Writing techniques. Upon completion of the interventions, a posttest was conducted by filling out the anger scale at the end of the counseling sessions. Parametric statistical analysis using the t-test was employed to test the research hypothesis.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

Data from the pretest and posttest for each group are detailed in Table 1. Table 1 shows a decrease in anger emotions in social media use before and after interventions were administered to each experimental group.

Table 1. Pretest and Posttest Data on Anger Emotions in Social Media Use

Subject	Experimental Group I		Subject	Experimental Group II	
	Pretest	Posttest		Pretest	Posttest
ANZ	112	46	DWC	98	61
EAL	100	55	KL	97	72
FK	97	70	SYP	104	85
SJ	116	64	SL	102	79
PR	98	61	JA	99	68
KI	101	51	BZ	103	65
LP	105	66	XA	97	67
TR	107	71	ZD	99	71

Hypothesis 1 results indicate that Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques effectively reduces anger emotions in students' social media use. The results of this hypothesis test are presented in Table 2, based on a significance value (2-tailed) greater than $0.000 < 0.05$, indicating a significant difference in the average anger levels on social media among students of State Junior High School 2 Wagir, Malang Regency, Indonesia, before and after the Gestalt group counseling intervention with Rehearsal techniques.

Table 2. Paired Sample t-Test Results for Experimental Group I

Paired Differences				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	44.000	12.024	4.251	33.948	54.052	10.350	7	.000

The difference in means is illustrated in Table 3, under the Mean column of the Paired Sample t-test output for Experimental Group I. The mean level of anger in social media among 8 samples from experimental group one before the intervention was 104.50, which decreased to a mean of 60.50 after the intervention.

Table 3. Output of the Paired Sample t-Test for Gestalt

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pretest	104.50	8	6.824	2.413
Posttest	60.50	8	9.055	3.202

Hypothesis 2 results state that Reality Counseling with Expressive Writing techniques effectively reduces anger emotions in social media use among students. The results of this hypothesis test are presented in Table 4. Based on the Sig. (2-tailed) value of $0.000 < 0.05$, there is a significant difference in the average anger levels on social media among 8 samples in experimental group II before and after the intervention with Reality Counseling using Expressive Writing techniques.

Table 4. Results of the Paired Sample t-Test for Reality

Paired Differences				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
Pair 1 Pretest - Posttest	28.875	6.578	2.326	23.376	34.374	12.416	7	.000

The difference in means is shown in Table 5, under the Mean column. The mean level of anger in social media among 8 samples from experimental group two before the intervention was 99.88, which decreased to a mean of 71.00 after the intervention.

Table 5. Output of the Paired Sample t-Test for Reality

Paired Samples Statistics		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest	99.880	8	2.748	0.972
	Posttest	71.000	8	7.764	2.745

Hypothesis 3 results (see Table 6) state that there is a comparison in the effectiveness of Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality group counseling with Expressive Writing techniques in reducing anger emotions in students' social media use. Based on the Sig (2-tailed) value of $0.026 < 0.05$, Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques is found to be more effective in reducing anger emotions in social media use among students of State Junior High School 2 Wagir, Malang Regency, Indonesia.

Table 6. Results of the Independent Sample t-Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
Result	Equal variances assumed	.499	.492	-2.490	14	.026	-10.50000	4.21731	-19.54523	-1.45477
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.490	13.681	.026	-10.50000	4.21731	-19.56504	-1.43496

3.2. Discussion

From the analysis, both Gestalt and Reality Counseling have proven effective in reducing anger emotions in students' use of social media. The delivery of Gestalt and Reality Counseling services was conducted in groups, as it was considered more time-efficient and effective in handling issues. According to Berg et al., 2(017), the advantages of group counseling include: resolving immediate problems; rediscovering or reassessing the counselees' self-perception through group dynamics; addressing interpersonal relationship issues; fostering awareness to improve oneself based on feedback from the group; and through group counseling, individuals do not feel alone in facing their problems. This approach eventually helps in filtering out stimuli that trigger anger, such as feelings of oppression, being undervalued, threatened, and verbal assaults (Lestari & Marjo, 2021; Mertoglu 2018), thereby leading to improved interpersonal relationships (Martin & Vieaux, 2016).

3.2.1. Reducing Anger in Sosial Media Through the Application of Gestalt Counseling

Gestalt group counseling using rehearsal techniques was conducted over six sessions. In the first session, the focus was on building relationships and engaging group members. The Gestalt counseling with Rehearsal techniques aimed to achieve awareness, emotional expression, and subsequently behavior implementation, enabling individuals to integrate their lives and believe in their potential (Aminah, 2018). In the second session, group members were able to achieve awareness as seen from their ability to express what triggers their anger in social media. Thus, the counselor could understand the counselees' situational problems. The awareness referred to here includes awareness of the issues faced and the process of resolving these issues, meaning either blocking or allowing oneself to accept these issues, thereby enabling individuals to act confidently without external influence (Capuzzi & Stauffer, 2016).

In the third session, group members were able to identify the causes of their anger and express these on the session worksheets provided. This way, group members understood the causes of their anger in social media, particularly their ability to communicate anger and the reverse (Setyowati,

2020). In the fourth session, group members learned to manage negative anger expressions into positive expressions while using social media, achieved through breathing exercises when encountering negative stimuli (Aprilianti & Laily, 2021). In the fifth session, group members practiced speaking to manage their anger more positively while using social media. If this habit continues in daily behavior, then the students will achieve behavioral awareness. By attaining awareness, a person can overcome stress and express anger appropriately (Handasah, 2014).

In the sixth session, an evaluation was conducted to determine how successful the behavioral plans implemented were in managing anger, measured by filling out the anger scale. From the post-test results, 2 students showed a change in their level of anger in social media from high to moderate, and 6 students showed a change from high to low. This was noted as 2 students with a change from high to moderate still struggled to manage anger from environmental stimuli, thus still experiencing turbulent emotions on social media. Meanwhile, the 6 students who changed from high to low were better able to control their emotions and could divert them to more beneficial activities. This prevented them from feeling provoked when facing problems on social media, thereby maximizing the efficiency of the Rehearsal technique over a long period (Silvey, 2014).

Based on the analysis of the subject group, Gestalt counseling using Rehearsal techniques to reduce anger in using social media among students, demonstrated a decrease in anger levels. The average anger level before the intervention with Gestalt group counseling using Rehearsal techniques was 104.50, which decreased to 60.50 after the intervention. This indicates that Gestalt counseling with Rehearsal techniques effectively reduces students' anger emotions when using social media. This study refers to various research that demonstrates the effectiveness of Gestalt counseling in managing emotions (Firman & Ersya, 2023). Supported by research from Erişen et.al, (2019), Gestalt counseling can significantly handle anger emotions. In line with research by Mutari et al. (2021), Gestalt counseling is beneficial for children experiencing psychological disorders, in this case, emotional issues. Moreover, Handasah, (2014b) has proven that by achieving awareness, an individual can manage stress feelings and correctly express anger emotions. Oberauer, (2019) believes that Rehearsal techniques can help individuals be better prepared for challenging social situations and reduce aggressive behaviors (Wathaniyah et al., 2022).

3.2.2. Reducing Anger in Social Media Through the Application of Reality Counseling

Reality group counseling with Expressive Writing techniques was conducted over six sessions. In the first session, relationships and engagement among group members were established by giving full attention, discussing neutral topics, and accepting group members wholly. The implementation of Reality Counseling focused on meeting basic needs, emphasizing the ability to assess behavior, confront reality, and take responsibility for chosen actions, thus integrating as part of a group (El Fiah & Anggralisa, 2017). In the second session, group members were able to express triggers for their anger. At this stage, the counselor encouraged group members to identify desires and provided opportunities to explore anger triggers on social media. Subsequently, counselees were guided to acknowledge their perceptions of the external world, as incorrect handling of anger can have long-term effects on individuals and interpersonal relationships (Martine et.al, 2016).

In the third session, group members identified the causes of their angry dispositions. The counselor facilitated this by asking members to write down why they become angry and the negative impacts of such a temperament on the task sheets provided, particularly focusing on avoiding causes of tension, turmoil, and aggressive behavior (Zarshenas et al., 2017). In the fourth session, group members managed negative anger expressions in social media by venting emotions through writing about themselves, their feelings, and actions, demonstrating the ability to remain calm in tense conditions (Shepherd & Cant, 2020). In the fifth session, group members communicated, wrote, and shared ways to manage their anger more positively while using social media. Continuing this habit in daily behavior, students become better individuals because their basic needs are met, thus they are more confident with the reality and more cautious in behavior triggered by anger (Fathimatuzzahro, 2018).

In the sixth session, an evaluation was conducted to assess how far the behavioral plans implemented had succeeded in managing anger in social media. The post-test results showed that 4

students exhibited a change in anger levels from high to moderate, and 4 students showed a change from high to low. It was noted that 4 students with a change from high to moderate were not fully committed to the agreed actions, as indicated by their still intense expression of anger on social media. Meanwhile, the 4 students who changed from high to low were better able to control their emotions and could divert them to activities that did not provoke anger, demonstrating their commitment and consistency with actions for change (Triyono, 2016).

Based on the analysis of the subject group, Reality Counseling using Expressive Writing techniques resulted in a reduction of anger emotions in using social media among students. The average anger score before the Reality group counseling intervention with Expressive Writing techniques was 99.88, which decreased to 71.00 after the intervention. This indicates that the application of Reality Counseling focuses on taking responsibility for individual perceptions of situations that trigger anger by aligning expectations with reality. This study is supported by previous research, indicating that Reality group counseling significantly helps reduce anger (Nootash et al., 2019). Consistent with research by Fathimatuzzahro, (2018b), those whose basic needs are met are more confident with reality, thus more cautious in behavior and protected from triggering anger. According to Leung et al., (2023) using Expressive Writing techniques helps individuals channel emotions experienced from their encounters, thereby reducing the intensity of negative emotions such as anger on social media. This is in line with research by Travagin et al., (2015) on adolescents aged 10-18 years with high emotional levels, showing that the Expressive Writing technique is quite helpful.

4. Conclusion

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the anger emotion scores among students at State Junior High School 2 Wagir, Malang Regency, Indonesia, before and after receiving treatment through Gestalt group counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality group counseling with Expressive Writing techniques. Thus, Gestalt counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality counseling with Expressive Writing are believed to be effective in assisting counselors to reduce anger emotions in social media use. The recommendation from this study is that school counselors are encouraged to use Gestalt counseling with Rehearsal techniques and Reality counseling with Expressive Writing techniques to address issues of anger emotions in social media. Additionally, future researchers are advised to conduct individual counseling sessions to achieve deeper insights regarding the anger emotions experienced by adolescents in social media contexts.

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