

The Impact of Learning Counseling Services Utilizing Discussion Techniques to Mitigate Learning Difficulties Among Students in Vocational High Schools

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Abstract

Learning difficulties are conditions in educational contexts characterized by specific barriers that impede the achievement of learning outcomes. This issue is experienced by tenth-grade students at the Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Vocational High School in Bandar Lampung, including (a) low academic performance, (b) students' slow pace in completing assignments, and (c) students exhibiting unusual attitudes such as indifference and pretense. The objective of this study is to assess the effect of learning counseling services that employ discussion techniques to reduce accounting learning difficulties among students at the Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Vocational High School in Bandar Lampung. This research adopts a pre-experimental design, specifically a one-group pretest-posttest design. The population for this study comprises 26 students, with a sample size of 8 students selected through purposive sampling techniques. The findings indicate that the pretest scores yielded a total of 909, with a mean value of 113, while the posttest scores amounted to 552, corresponding to a mean of 69. The difference between pretest and posttest scores is calculated to be 44, with an average difference of 1.63. A non-parametric Wilcoxon test conducted using SPSS version 25 revealed a Z-value of -2.527, with an Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed) of 0.012. Since the value of 0.012 is lower than the threshold of 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H_a). Consequently, there is a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest results, leading to the conclusion that learning counseling services employing discussion techniques effectively reduce accounting learning difficulties among students at the Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Vocational High School in Bandar Lampung.

Keywords: Learning Counseling, Discussion Techniques, Accounting Learning Difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

Guidance and counseling aim to assist the counselee in achieving optimal development and independence across personal, academic, social, and career aspects. The counseling process serves as a professional service provided by counselors to individuals facing difficulties. Therefore, schools require guidance and counseling as a systematic, continuous, and programmatic effort conducted by counselors or guidance teachers to facilitate student development and help them achieve their life goals (Herestusiwi et al., 2023). To address learning difficulties, the use of Learning Counseling Services becomes essential. This service is specifically designed to help students cultivate effective study habits, develop curiosity, and enhance motivation toward acquiring knowledge (Getachew & Tekle, 2020).

Discussion techniques serve as a method involving two or more individuals aimed at allowing each member to express their opinions while exchanging experiences. This collaborative effort is critical for collectively solving problems (Ramli & Saputra, 2023).

The underlying purpose of employing discussion techniques is to foster the development of skills and the courage to articulate one's views clearly while facilitating the exploration of consensus through dialogue rather than coercion (Fahyuni et al., 2023).

Learning difficulties experienced by students in absorbing lessons imparted by teachers represent the conditions indicative of such struggles. As stated by Djmarah, learning difficulties reflect a gap between the expected academic performance and the actual performance achieved by students (Hazima & Khairuddin, 2023). It can be concluded that learning difficulties occur when students cannot fully engage in the learning process, adversely affecting the anticipated academic outcomes. Importantly, learning difficulties are not restricted solely to students with below-average intelligence but also encompass those with average or above-average intelligence. Indicators for identifying learning difficulties include low academic performance, an imbalance between effort and achieved results, slow task completion, unusual attitudes such as indifference or pretense, abnormal behaviors like withdrawal from peers or irritability, as well as instances where students display a high potential yet achieve poor academic results (Hazima & Khairuddin, 2023).

The practical implications of such behaviors illustrate a fundamental aspect of learning difficulties. Psychological factors, particularly among students, play a significant role in the success of learning, alongside teacher influences. Consequently, this issue closely aligns with the significance of guidance counseling since psychological challenges related to learning difficulties become focal points for counseling inquiry (Baroroh & Imania, 2024). Given these conditions, the role of teachers, especially guidance counselors, becomes crucial in addressing the multifaceted issues faced by students during learning activities.

To mitigate learning difficulties, learning counseling utilizing discussion techniques can be instrumental. This approach allows students to share their challenges without fear, enabling collaborative problem-solving. Employing discussion techniques within the learning process proves to be a strategy that aids students in gradually acquiring information and understanding (Fahyuni et al., 2022). Dimiyati suggests that educators can utilize discussion techniques to convey material or skills and subsequently engage the class in discussions that encourage critical thinking on relevant topics, followed by grouping students for the application of newly acquired skills and fostering their understanding of the subject matter (Hulukati et al., 2022).

Drawing from Gestalt theory, discussion techniques are effective in addressing learning difficulties since low academic performance indicates initial learning challenges. However, it is crucial to recognize that low academic achievement is not solely attributable to low intelligence; numerous students exhibit high intelligence yet still demonstrate low academic performance (Saputra et al., 2021). Therefore, discussion techniques can alleviate learning obstacles as they empower students to express their opinions and feel less isolated in their experiences. Implementing Gestalt theory in

overcoming learning difficulties entails a six-step process: case identification, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment provision, evaluation, and follow-up (Hendriani & Neviyarni, 2023).

Preliminary research conducted by the author indicates that students in grade X at Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Vocational High School in Bandar Lampung experience significant learning difficulties. This conclusion is drawn from observations of students who struggle with vocational lessons, specifically accounting, which they find challenging to comprehend. Documentation obtained from the guidance counselor at SMK YPPL Bandar Lampung during preliminary research on January 20, 2022, yielded data indicating students experiencing learning difficulties in accounting, as presented in Table 1.1.

Table Data of Students Experiencing Learning Difficulties

No	Name	Indicator	Indicate
1	EK	-	High
2	DA	✓	High
3	NR	✓	High
4	OG	✓	High
5	TA	-	High
6	VA	✓	High
7	ZA	✓	High
8	RF	✓	High

Key Indicators: 1) Low academic performance 2) Slow task completion 3) Unusual attitudes, such as indifference or pretense

Problem Identification and Delimitation

1. Problem Identification Based on the aforementioned background, the author identifies the following issues:
 1. Insufficient understanding among students regarding vocational lessons, leading to difficulties in accounting.
 2. Lack of learning counseling services to alleviate learning difficulties among students.
 3. Identification of eight students struggling with accounting at SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang.
 4. Deficiencies in students' grasp of accounting material.
 5. Insufficient learning counseling services utilizing discussion techniques to mitigate accounting learning difficulties.

Delimitation of the Problem Based on the background and identified problems presented, the author delineates the scope of the research as follows:

1. The service utilized in this research focuses on learning counseling.

2. The technique employed is discussion-based to reduce learning difficulties in accounting among students at SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Bandar Lampung.

Problem Formulation

Based on the identified problems within the study, the formulated research question is whether learning counseling services utilizing discussion techniques impact the reduction of accounting learning difficulties among students at SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Bandar Lampung?

METODE PENELITIAN

Format This research employs a quantitative approach, characterized by the collection of data using research instruments, analysis, and statistical methods, aimed at testing the established hypothesis. According to Arikunto, a quantitative approach utilizes numerical data from data collection through interpretation and presentation of results, allowing for objective analysis (Herestusiwi et al., 2023).

Research Type

This study adopts an experimental research design, specifically a pre-experimental design featuring one group, known as the one-group pretest-posttest design. This design is utilized as it acknowledges the influence of external variables on the dependent variable. In this case, the results of the experiment (the dependent variable) are not solely influenced by the independent variable due to the presence of uncontrolled variables and non-random sample selection (Getachew & Tekle, 2020). The one-group pretest-posttest design is implemented to evaluate the effects of treatments by comparing the outcomes before and after the treatment is administered (Ramli & Saputra, 2023).

The design is visually represented as follows:

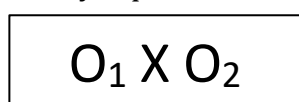


Figure 3.1: One-Group Pretest – Posttest Design

- O₁: Pretest score (Before counseling intervention using discussion techniques)
- X: Treatment provided through learning counseling using discussion techniques
- O₂: Posttest score (After counseling intervention using discussion techniques)

Based on the pre-experimental framework, the study unfolds as follows:

1. **Pre-test Phase** In this phase, initial assessments are conducted on the sample from the tenth-grade class at Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Vocational School in

Bandar Lampung utilizing observational case books to measure accounting learning difficulties through questionnaires.

2. **Treatment Phase** Students receive treatment via learning counseling that employs discussion techniques, aimed at overcoming the identified accounting learning difficulties. This treatment is conducted over seven sessions, maximizing goal achievement.
3. **Post-test Phase** The final assessment occurs after treatment, using adjustment scales compared to the initial pre-test, intended to measure the effectiveness of the treatment provided to the students.

Table 1: Treatment Design

No	Meeting	Sub-topic	Session Count	Time
1.	1	Pretest	1 session	45 mins
2	2	Group formation and building rapport	1 session	45 mins
3	3	Identifying core problems and root causes	1 session	45 mins
4	4	Continuing problem identification and planning assistance	1 session	90 mins
5	5	Providing treatment and motivation	1 session	45 mins
6	6	Continued treatment and motivation	1 session	45 mins
7	7	<i>Post Test</i>	1 session	45 mins

Population, Sample, and Data Collection Techniques

1. **Population** According to Sugiyono, the population refers to the general area of the study that embodies specific objects or subjects defined by the researcher for examination and subsequent conclusions (Fahyuni et al., 2023). In this study, the population consists of 26 students from SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Bandar Lampung.
2. **Sample** A sample is defined as a subset of the population that possesses particular characteristics. Thus, a sample allows for representative conclusions about the larger population (Hazima & Khairuddin, 2023). The technique employed in this research is purposive sampling, wherein specific considerations guide the

selection of samples. The study focuses on eight students experiencing accounting learning difficulties, as detailed below:

Table : List of Sample Students Experiencing Learning Difficulties

No	Name	Class	Gender
1	OG	X	Male
2	EK	X	Male
3	DA	X	Male
4	VA	X	Male
5	RF	X	Male
6	TA	X	Female
7	NR	X	Female
8	ZA	X	Female

The questionnaire method involves a series of questions addressing the research focus. To gather data efficiently and cost-effectively, the survey collects responses from the identified respondents, allowing for rapid data acquisition (Baroroh & Imania, 2024). The use of questionnaires enhances anonymity, encouraging honest responses. This study utilizes a Likert scale to measure the variables, resulting in items derived from variable indicators that gauge student learning difficulties (Fahyuni et al., 2022).

Table : Response Scoring with Likert Scale

No	Statement	RESPONSE
1	Favorable (positive)	5 4 3 2 1
2	Unfavorable (negative)	1 2 3 4 5

Learning difficulties are categorized into five criteria: very agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and very disagree. The study consists of 30 items related to learning difficulties, categorized into five levels ranging from very high to very low. The calculation of intervals is as follows:

- Highest score: ($5 \times 30 = 150$)
- Lowest score: ($1 \times 30 = 30$)
- Range: ($150 - 30 = 120$)
- Interval distance: ($120 / 3 = 40$)

This interval can be represented as follows:

$$I = \frac{NT - NR}{3}$$

Figure: Interval Calculation Formula

Interval Criteria

30 – 70 Low

71 - 110 Medium

111 - 150 High

Operational Definitions of Variables

According to Sugiyono, research variables are attributes or properties of individuals or subjects that possess specific variations, established for analysis and conclusion (Fahyuni et al., 2023). The study comprises two variables: (a) the independent variable—learning counseling services using discussion techniques, and (b) the dependent variable—reduction of accounting learning difficulties.

This relationship can be illustrated as follows:

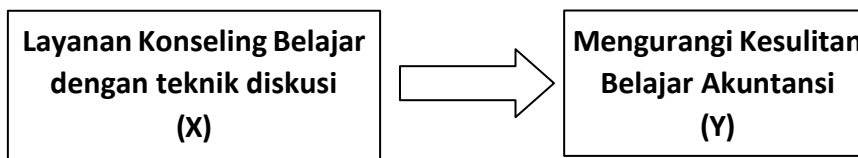


Figure : Research Variables

Validity and Reliability Testing

Validity Testing Validity indicates whether a measuring instrument accurately measures what it is intended to measure. A valid result aligns collected data with the actual scenario concerning the object of study. Item validation is conducted using SPSS software, applying

product-moment correlation to compare individual item scores with total scores across 45 questionnaire items, targeting 30 respondents (Hulukati et al., 2022).

After calculating, we ascertain significance by comparing (r_{hit}) with (r_{table}) . If (r_{hit}) is greater than or equal to (r_{table}) at a 5% significance level, the item is valid. Conversely, if (r_{hit}) is less, the item is invalid. From the 45 items assessed, 30 were found valid (Saputra et al., 2021).

Table: Case Processing Summary

N	%
Valid	30 100.0
Excluded	0 0.0
Total	30 100.0

Reliability Testing Reliability refers to the consistency of a measuring instrument over multiple trials or measurements concerning the same phenomenon. A reliable instrument yields the same results repeatedly (Hendriani & Neviyarni, 2023). In this study, reliability testing utilized SPSS version 25, which produced the following outcome:

Table 3.10: Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
0.887	30

Hypothesis Testing

The analysis employs non-parametric statistics due to the normal distribution requirement. When this criterion is unmet, deviations impact the validity of analyses. The research examines pretest and posttest differences to determine the effect of group counseling using discussion techniques, employing the Wilcoxon test via SPSS software version 25.

The Wilcoxon test generated a Z-value of -2.527 and a significance level of 0.012. Since 0.012 is less than 0.05, we accept hypothesis (H_a).

Hypothesis Testing for Wilcoxon *Counseling services using discussion techniques aim to reduce accounting learning difficulties among students of Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Vocational High School.*

- (H_0): Learning counseling using discussion techniques is ineffective in alleviating accounting learning difficulties.
- (H_a): Learning counseling using discussion techniques is effective in alleviating accounting learning difficulties.

Data presented in the table indicates changes in scores from pre-experiment to post-experiment assessments, suggesting significant improvement resulting from the implemented treatments.

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Based on this output, there exist notable differences between pretest and posttest scores, affirming the effectiveness of counseling services using discussion techniques in reducing learning difficulties.

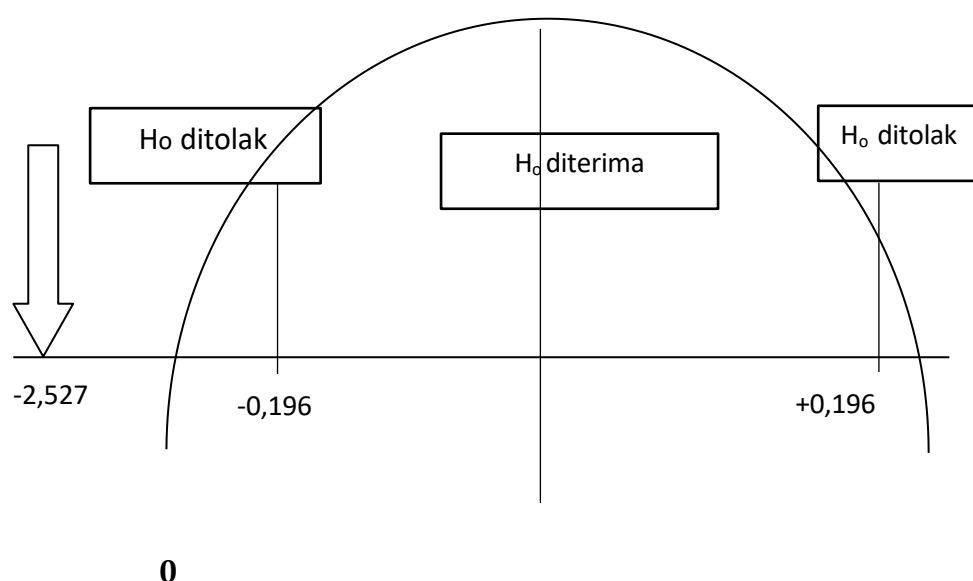


Figure: Hypothesis Curve

Discussion

Based on the analysis of the data, a comparative study was conducted between the pretest and posttest results of the students. The pretest scores totaled 909, with a mean of 113, while the posttest scores were 552, resulting in a mean of 69. This indicates a difference of 44 points between the pretest and posttest scores. These results suggest a reduction in accounting learning difficulties for the students in the tenth grade following the implementation of counseling services utilizing discussion techniques. Statistical outputs reveal a Z-score of -2.527 at a 5% significance level, with an asymptotic significance (2-

tailed) of 0.012. Since 0.012 is less than 0.05, we conclude that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. Therefore, a statistically significant difference exists between the pretest and posttest results, indicating that the learning counseling services through discussion techniques effectively reduce the accounting learning difficulties experienced by the students at SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Bandar Lampung.

Learning difficulties are characterized by various obstacles in the learning process that hinder students' attainment of expected academic outcomes. The learning difficulties observed in students reflect a gap between the anticipated academic achievement and the actual performance of the students. This disparity adversely impacts students' academic success, raising concerns for guidance counselors to facilitate students in overcoming learning difficulties and leveraging their potential Kadiyono & Utami (2023). Counseling services are critical as they assist students facing personal challenges that can impede their optimal engagement in the learning process. Academic counseling aims to develop the learning skills of students while addressing their unique learning difficulties (Mutohhari et al., 2021).

One technique used in group counseling is the discussion technique, which promotes the exchange of experiences and insights, leading to collaborative decision-making. The counseling sessions, delivered over seven meetings—including pretest and posttest evaluations and five additional counseling sessions—demonstrate a decline in students' reported difficulties with accounting. Between the two assessments, the class X students' pretest scores of 909 (mean of 113) decreased to posttest scores of 552 (mean of 69), highlighting the effectiveness of the counseling intervention.

In support of these findings, prior research indicates similar trends, showing a significant reduction in learning difficulties faced by students as a direct result of counseling interventions (Rahmiani & Marwandi, 2022). Therefore, it can be reasoned that learning counseling services incorporating discussion techniques are instrumental in alleviating accounting learning difficulties among students at SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Bandar Lampung.

Conclusion

In summary, the research findings and subsequent data analysis indicate that learning counseling services utilizing discussion techniques significantly impact the reduction of accounting learning difficulties among students at SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Bandar Lampung. Data analysis revealed a decrease in students' accounting learning

difficulties following the implementation of counseling services, evidenced by N-Gain scores indicating a decline from the pretest to the posttest. Specifically, the average score of the pretest for accounting difficulties was 113, which decreased to 69 after the counseling intervention. Utilizing non-parametric Wilcoxon tests through SPSS version 25, the resulting Z-value of -2.527 with an asymptotic significance of 0.012 further supports the hypothesis that counseling services employing discussion techniques can effectively mitigate learning challenges in accounting. Since the value of 0.012 is less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, confirming that a significant difference exists between the pretest and posttest outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion, the author offers the following recommendations to various stakeholders:

1. **For the Principal of SMK Yayasan Pendidikan Panjang Bandar Lampung:** Emphasize the importance of learning counseling activities to address students' learning difficulties by facilitating counseling sessions within the school environment.
2. **For Students:** Continue efforts to mitigate accounting learning difficulties and broaden knowledge of strategies to maintain learning motivation. This can further enhance their academic resilience and engagement.
3. **For Guidance Counselors:** Develop and implement counseling programs in collaboration with subject teachers to effectively address students' learning challenges. Regular monitoring of student progress during learning activities should also be prioritized to prevent difficulties in accounting as well as other subjects.
4. **For Future Researchers:** It is hoped that this study can serve as a reference for subsequent research addressing learning counseling services and their efficacy in vocational education contexts.

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