

## EFFECTIVENESS OF GROUP COUNSELING WITH THE THOUGHT STOPPING TECHNIQUE IN IMPROVING THE SELF-CONFIDENCE OF STUDENTS WHO ARE VICTIMS OF ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP

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### **Abstract**

*Students who are victims of abusive relationships tend to experience a decline in self-confidence due to prolonged emotional and psychological pressure. Low self-confidence can hinder their ability to make decisions, interact socially, and regulate emotions. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of group counseling using the thought-stopping technique in improving the self-confidence of students affected by abusive relationships. The research used a quasi-experimental method with a non-equivalent control group design. The subjects were five students with low self-confidence levels. Data were collected using a self-confidence scale and analyzed with the Wilcoxon test. The results showed a significant increase in the experimental group after receiving group counseling with the thought-stopping technique (significance value  $0.043 < 0.05$ ). Meanwhile, no change was found in the control group. Therefore, the thought-stopping technique in group counseling is proven effective in increasing the self-confidence of students who are victims of abusive relationships. In addition, this intervention was designed by integrating Islamic values, such as tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), positive thinking, and recognizing one's potential as a noble creation of Allah SWT. These principles ensured that the counseling process not only addressed psychological recovery but also strengthened students' spiritual foundations, enabling them to rebuild confidence and dignity in accordance with the holistic approach of Islamic education. The integration of these values makes the results of this study applicable for PAI teachers and counselors as a model for supporting students' mental and emotional recovery.*

**Keywords:** Group Counseling; Thought Stopping; Self-Confidence; Abusive Relationships

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## A. Introduction

College students are part of a social group undergoing a transitional phase from adolescence to adulthood. In line with the opinion expressed by Hulukati & Djibran (2018), college students are in the early stages of adulthood, usually between the ages of 18 and 25. In this phase, they face various challenges in the academic, social, and emotional fields. High academic demands, broader social interactions, and the search for identity are part of their journey in this phase. In line with the opinion of Wulandari & Pratama (2023), the current development of higher education brings students to various challenges, both academically, socially, and psychologically. Facing this pressure, self-confidence is a key factor that helps them manage stress and build healthy relationships with their surroundings (Wulandari & Pratama, 2023). In Islamic education perspectives, self-confidence development is closely tied to values such as *husnuzan* (positive thinking), *hifzh al-'ird* (preserving dignity), and recognizing oneself as noble creature (noble creation of Allah SWT) (Al-Ghazali, 2000; Ibn Qayyim, 1996). These principles, integrated from the outset in educational and psychological approaches, not only strengthen personal resilience but also guide students toward balanced spiritual, emotional, and social growth (Agustin, 2018). In line with research by Umarta & Mangundjaya (2023), the self-confidence possessed by college students allows them to develop through various experiences and improve skills, thus forming independent and emotionally healthy individuals (Umarta & Mangundjaya, 2023).

Self-confidence is a crucial aspect for individuals, especially for students undergoing the process of development towards adulthood. According to Deni & Ifdil (2016), self-confidence is a person's belief that every challenge in life must be faced with action and effort to overcome it. Individuals who are self-confident tend to be more optimistic, happy, tolerant, and responsible. Self-confidence allows a person to make decisions confidently and face various challenges, both in social and academic aspects. In line with this, Fauzi et al. (2024) also explain that self-confidence is a person's feeling and belief in their own ability to achieve success through personal effort, while maintaining a positive view of themselves and their environment. This allows individuals to act with complete confidence and face any situation calmly. However, not all students have stable levels of self-confidence. Some experience a significant decline in self-confidence, especially those who have experienced traumatic experiences, such as being in an abusive relationship. Student self-confidence is influenced by various factors, such as physical appearance, self-concept, relationships with parents, and peer support. In line with Desje's (2018) opinion, factors that can influence self-confidence are classified into two, namely internal factors (self-concept, self-esteem, physical condition, life experience) and external factors (education, work, environment). In line with Haque et al.'s (2022) opinion, factors that influence individual self-confidence are self-concept, self-esteem, experience, and education. Aspects of self-confidence include belief in one's abilities, optimism, objectivity, responsibility, and a rational and realistic attitude in facing various situations Deni & Ifdil. (2016).

Victims of abusive relationships often experience a drastic decrease in self-confidence due to long-term psychological pressure. This can make them doubt their abilities and make it difficult to rebuild healthy self-confidence. According to Darma et al. (2023), individuals with low self-concept tend to view themselves negatively. Victims of abusive relationships often experience feelings of alienation from themselves, which can lead to feelings of worthlessness and an inability to make decisions confidently. Research by Darma et al. (2023) also explains that victims of abusive relationships often feel worthless, unworthy of protection, and unwilling to voice their opinions in decision-making. Furthermore, the traumatic experiences they experience can create a fear of forming new relationships, hinder their ability to interact socially, and increase the risk of anxiety and depression. In line with the research by Darma et al. (2023), individuals who experience violence, whether physical or verbal, are at risk of experiencing profound trauma. This can make it difficult to build healthy relationships in the future, reduce self-confidence, and make the process of recovering from traumatic experiences more difficult.

*Abusive relationship* or abusive relationships or relationships full of violence both physically (hitting, slapping, kicking, pulling hair, throwing things at the partner), verbally (cursing, criticizing, shouting or yelling, threatening), emotionally (manipulation, controlling the partner, isolating from friends and family), and psychologically (Gaslighting, intimidating by staring, making people afraid to express their feelings, belittling achievements). Explained in the book by Beverly Engel (2017) abusive relationships include emotionally abusive behavior, ranging from verbal violence such as belittling, cursing, and constant criticism, to more subtle tactics such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to provide a sense of security. The pattern in these relationships is often cyclical, where the perpetrator occasionally shows affection, making it increasingly difficult for the victim to escape from the harmful relationship. In agreement with Irmayanti & Zuroidah (2024) emotional dependence can make someone more vulnerable to violence in relationships. Victims trapped in abusive relationships often have great difficulty breaking free, due to various factors such as manipulation, fear, or the hope of change from the perpetrator. Wishesa & Suprapti (2014) agree that adolescents choose to remain in abusive relationships because they have normalized abuse as part of the relationship. A lack of understanding of boundaries in healthy relationships and emotional dependence often make it difficult for them to realize that they are in a harmful relationship. Abusive relationships are influenced by emotional dependence, psychological pressure, and manipulation and control from the perpetrator. Factors such as a lack of understanding of healthy relationships and minimal support from their surroundings make it even more difficult for victims to escape from abusive situations (Beverly Engel, 2017).

Facts on the ground show that some students experience abusive relationships. Some are aware of the situation and try to leave, while others remain unaware that they are trapped in an unhealthy relationship. Students from several universities experience abusive relationships filled with control and manipulation. This situation negatively

impacts them, causing decreased self-confidence and significant emotional distress. A lack of understanding and emotional factors are often the reasons why they persist. Research by Putra & Tyas (2023) found that 38.1% of students experienced psychological violence, 10.5% experienced physical violence, 11.4% experienced sexual violence, and 6.7% experienced economic violence in their relationships. The impact of abusive relationships causes significant losses, victims feel isolated and struggle to maintain healthy relationships (Tisyara & Valentina, 2024).

Given the negative impacts of abusive relationships, appropriate interventions are needed to help victims overcome psychological distress and improve their well-being. One form of intervention that can be implemented is group counseling, which has proven effective in providing social support and helping individuals build skills in dealing with and resolving interpersonal problems. Group counseling is an effective support service to support personal development, prevent psychological problems, and assist in managing interpersonal conflict and problem-solving. In line with the opinion of (Harahap et al., 2022), group counseling services are guidance and counseling services that allow students to have the opportunity to discuss and resolve problems they experience through group dynamics. Through group interactions, individuals can share experiences, gain new perspectives, and develop better social and emotional skills (Adhiputra, 2015). Group counseling is an effective method for counselors to help clients overcome their problems. By utilizing group dynamics, this method allows individuals to gain social support, share experiences, and learn from other members. Group counseling can also help increase self-confidence, form more positive mindsets, and encourage individuals to develop emotionally and socially (Yandri et al., 2022). Group counseling using the thought stopping technique was effective in helping individuals overcome negative thoughts and improve self-confidence. Therefore, it was important for counselors to understand the application of thought stopping techniques in group counseling as an effort to support personal development, particularly in building self-confidence. Future research was expected to examine the effectiveness of this technique more specifically in the context of students who were victims of abusive relationships (Rostiana et al., 2019).

By applying the thought-stopping technique, counselors were able to help victims of abusive relationships (dependent variable: self-confidence) improve their self-confidence. This technique, as an intervention within the framework of cognitive counseling, was part of a therapeutic process aimed at changing negative thought patterns and destructive thinking habits, thereby fostering healthier behavioral changes. It worked by stopping automatic, threatening, or harmful thoughts, preventing them from developing into deeper negative cognitive patterns, and replacing them with more positive and constructive ones (Widya Asmara et al., 2023). Through the experimental design used in this study, the thought-stopping technique helped students who were victims of abusive relationships recognize, stop, and replace negative thoughts with rational and positive ones (Widya Asmara et al., 2023).

In addition, this approach was consistent with the values of Islamic education, which emphasized the importance of maintaining dignity, thinking positively, and recognizing one's potential as a noble creation of Allah SWT. The integration of spiritual principles into the counseling process ensured that the intervention not only provided psychological benefits but also strengthened the foundation of faith and self-awareness, enabling students to rise and live their lives with greater confidence and dignity. This study explicitly affirmed itself as a synthesis of psychological approaches and spiritual values in Islamic education, thereby strengthening both its scientific foundation and practical relevance.

The novelty of this research lay in the fact that very few studies had integrated cognitive counseling particularly the thought-stopping technique with Islamic values in efforts to improve the self-confidence of students who were victims of abusive relationships. Therefore, this study was conducted to examine the extent to which the thought-stopping technique in group counseling could enhance the self-confidence of students who were victims of abusive relationships, by combining scientific methodology (experimental design) with spiritual insight to contribute significantly to both academic discourse and practical counseling applications.

## **B. Method**

This research employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental research design, specifically the Non-Equivalent Control Group Design. According to (Sugiyono, 2013), quasi-experimental research is a development of the true experimental design but does not fully meet the requirements for strict control of external variables. In this design, both the experimental and control groups were given a pretest to measure baseline conditions. The treatment was provided only to the experimental group, and after the intervention was completed, a posttest was administered to both groups to determine any differences resulting from the treatment.

This research was conducted at the State Islamic University of North Sumatra in July 2025, which included the preparation stage, implementation of group counseling services, and data collection and analysis. The research subjects were students selected based on pretest results, namely those who had low self-confidence due to abusive relationships. From the given scale, five students were identified as having low self-confidence, and these students were used as the sample for the entire counseling series. In implementing the group counseling services, the intervention incorporated Islamic values such as maintaining dignity, fostering positive thinking, and recognizing one's potential as a noble creation of Allah SWT so that the approach was consistent with the cultural and spiritual context of the participants.

The data collection technique used in this study was a self-confidence scale questionnaire. Before its distribution, the instrument was tested for validity and declared valid. Instrument reliability was then tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a value of 0.726, indicating moderate reliability. Furthermore, to test the research hypothesis

and analyze differences between pretest and posttest scores, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used, as the data were non-parametric. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 26 to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the statistical results.

### C.Results and Discussion

#### 1. Results

This study was conducted to measure the effectiveness of group counseling services using the thought-stopping technique in increasing the self-confidence of students who are victims of abusive relationships. Data were collected through pre-tests and post-tests using a Likert-scale self-confidence measurement instrument that has been tested for validity and reliability. The research subjects were divided into two groups: an experimental group that received group counseling services using the thought-stopping technique and a control group that was not given any treatment during the research process. The results of the pre-test and post-test of the self-confidence scale in students who were victims of abusive relationships are as follows:

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution and Percentage of Pre-test of Experimental Group and Control Group**

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Interval	F	Category	%	Interval	F	Category	%
73-100	0	Tall	0	73-100	0	Tall	0
45-72	5	Currently	100	45-72	5	Currently	100
17-44	0	Low	0	17-44	0	Low	0
Amount	5		100	Amount	5		100

Based on the results of the data analysis presented in Table 1 regarding the frequency distribution and percentage of pre-test scores in the experimental group and the control group, it was found that in the experimental group there were 5 (five) students with a level of self-confidence in the medium category with a percentage of 100%. Meanwhile, in the control group, there were 5 (five) students showing a level of self-confidence in the medium category with a percentage of 100%. Based on the results of the pre-test, the experimental group was then given group counseling services with the thought stopping technique for 4 (four) meetings by an experimenter who has expertise in the field of guidance and counseling. The results of the treatment given by the experimenter can be seen in Table 2 below:

**Table 2. Frequency Distribution And Percentage Of Post-Test Of Experimental Group and Control Group**

Experimental Group				Control Group			
Interval	F	Category	%	Interval	F	Category	%
73-100	5	Tall	5	73-100	0	Tall	0
45-72	0	Currently	0	45-72	5	Currently	100
17-44	0	Low	0	17-44	0	Low	0
Amount	5		100	Amount	5		100

From the results of the research and treatment conducted by the experimenter, a significant increase in the self-confidence of students in the experimental group was seen. The results of the data analysis presented in Table 2 show the frequency distribution and percentage of post-test scores in the experimental and control groups. In the experimental group, all 5 (five) students experienced an increase in self-confidence and were in the high category with a percentage of 100%. Meanwhile, in the control group, all 5 (five) students remained in the medium category with a percentage of 100%. Based on the data in Table 1 and Table 2, significant changes were found in the experimental group after being given an intervention in the form of group counseling services with the thought stopping technique. Before the intervention, all students were in the medium category with a percentage of 100%, but after the intervention, all students in the experimental group changed to the high category, also with a percentage of 100%. In contrast, in the control group there was no change; all students remained in the medium category.

Based on these data, an overall increase in self-confidence was observed in the experimental group. In contrast, the control group showed no improvement, as all students remained in the moderate category with a percentage of 100%. These findings provide an initial indication that group counseling services using the thought-stopping technique have a positive contribution to increasing the self-confidence of students who are victims of abusive relationships. However, to ensure that this difference is statistically significant and not simply a coincidence, further analysis using the Wilcoxon statistical test is required. The results of this analysis will be presented and discussed in the following section.

**Table 3. Wilcoxon Statistical Test Results**

	Post-testExperiment - Pre-testExperiment	Post-testControl - Pre-testControl
Z	-2,023	-944
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.043	0.345

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon statistical test presented in Table 3, a Z value of -2.023 was obtained with a significance value of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.043 for the experimental group. This significance value is smaller than  $\alpha = 0.05$ , which indicates that there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in the experimental group. Thus, it can be concluded that there was a significant increase in self-

confidence after students who were victims of abusive relationships participated in group counseling services with the thought stopping technique.

The results of this study provide evidence that group counseling services using the thought-stopping technique have a significant impact on increasing the self-confidence of students experiencing the impact of abusive relationships. The thought-stopping technique, which is part of the cognitive approach, helps individuals recognize and stop negative thoughts that damage self-esteem, and replace them with more rational and constructive cognitive responses. In the context of this study, students were given space to evaluate the thought patterns that have weakened their self-confidence, and learn to form new beliefs that are more adaptive and empowering in dealing with the relationship dynamics they have experienced. In contrast, in the control group, the Z value obtained was -0.944 with a significance value of 0.345, which is greater than  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This indicates that there was no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test in the control group, so there was no increase in self-confidence.

The initial self-confidence of students who were victims of abusive relationships before receiving group counseling services using the thought-stopping technique showed that their self-confidence level was still at a moderate level. Based on the results of the pre-test conducted before the intervention, data showed that in the experimental group, all five students were in the moderate category. The same was true in the control group, where all five students were also in the moderate category. No students in either group showed high or low levels of self-confidence.

This condition reflects that in the initial stage, both the experimental and control groups had relatively comparable self-esteem levels, with all students in the moderate category and not showing any improvement in self-esteem. This research aligns with (Rostiana et al., 2019) which shows that students who are victims of bullying tend to have moderate to low levels of self-esteem in the initial stage before being given group counseling intervention. This indicates that individuals experiencing psychological distress due to unhealthy relationships, including abusive relationships, generally have negative self-perceptions and are unable to develop positive beliefs about themselves. This situation aligns with the findings of Rostiana et al. (2019), who also noted that students who are victims of bullying have low or moderate self-esteem, indicating the psychological impact of their negative experiences. This initial condition provides an important foundation for providing appropriate psychological interventions, such as thought-stopping techniques, to help them rebuild healthy self-esteem.

The aforementioned research is supported by research (Whitney & Smith, 2022), which found that individuals who have experienced abusive relationships tend to have low self-esteem and experience distorted self-perceptions. This research suggests that the emotional distress experienced in unhealthy relationships can weaken self-esteem, lead to an inability to assess themselves positively, and limit an individual's capacity to make healthy decisions. In this context, providing psychological intervention through group counseling is considered effective because it not only provides emotional support but also

a reflective space for individuals to reconstruct their thought patterns and beliefs.

Furthermore, this study aligns with findings (Asniah et al., 2023) that show that adolescent girls who are victims of dating violence remain in unhealthy relationships due to internal factors such as love and expectations for change in their partners, as well as external factors such as pressure from their partners and social environments that support dominant relationships. The impact of violence, whether psychological, physical, social, or economic, weakens women's self-esteem and reinforces their subordinate position in a patriarchal culture. Partner dominance, emotional manipulation, and restrictive gender norms further exacerbate victims' powerlessness to leave the relationship. All of these findings reinforce the understanding that experiences in unhealthy relationships significantly affect how individuals view themselves and the importance of psychological interventions such as group counseling with thought-stopping techniques as an effort to reconstruct their self-confidence.

## **2. Discussion**

Based on the results of the post-test data analysis, a significant change in students' self-confidence levels was identified after being given a group counseling intervention using the thought-stopping technique. All students in the experimental group experienced increased self-confidence and were in the high category, indicating positive developments in self-confidence, courage in making decisions, and the ability to cope with emotional stress resulting from experiences in abusive relationships. In contrast, students in the control group showed no significant changes and remained in the moderate category. These findings indicate that group counseling using the thought-stopping technique had a positive and even impact on all participants in the experimental group.

This is in line with research (Dermawan et al., 2024) which shows that the thought-stopping technique in group counseling is proven effective in reducing public speaking anxiety in students. This study also noted a significant decrease in public speaking anxiety after implementing this technique. A similar trend can be seen in the context of increasing self-confidence, where the thought-stopping technique plays a role in overcoming negative thought patterns that hinder the development of students' self-confidence. Support for the effectiveness of this technique is also seen in research (Lestari, 2024) which shows that the application of thought-stopping within a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach can help individuals control emotional reactions and maintain harmonious family relationships. This technique effectively helps individuals replace negative thoughts with positive affirmations, thereby strengthening psychological resilience in the face of emotional stress. These two findings emphasize the importance of thought-stopping-based interventions in responding to psychological problems faced by individuals, whether anxiety in speaking, self-confidence issues, or emotional conflict in the family context.

Furthermore, research (Asmara et al., 2023) corroborates these findings, demonstrating that the application of the thought-stopping technique through individual counseling services was effective in reducing social anxiety in new inmates at the

Palembang Women's Prison. After five counseling sessions, clients were able to control negative thoughts, increase their courage to interact socially, and demonstrate increased self-confidence and self-acceptance. This process demonstrates that the thought-stopping technique can be a relevant intervention strategy to help individuals cope with emotional distress and rebuild positive self-beliefs.

Intervention using thought-stopping-based group counseling techniques has been shown to significantly increase self-confidence in the experimental group, consisting of students who were victims of abusive relationships. This indicates that a thought-stopping-based approach can help students overcome negative thought patterns associated with their traumatic experiences and increase self-confidence in facing social situations. This is in line with research conducted by (Lailatus'adah & Christiana, 2020) which shows that individual counseling using thought-stopping techniques has been proven effective in increasing the self-confidence of students in junior high schools (SMP). In the study, six subjects with low self-confidence scores participated in four counseling sessions based on thought-stopping procedures. This technique helps students stop the flow of negative thoughts verbally and internally, then replace them with positive affirmations that foster courage in socializing, actively participating, and expressing opinions in class.

This finding is in line with (Nastiti, 2017) who tested the effectiveness of the thought stopping technique to increase self-confidence in eighth grade students at SMP Negeri 1 Kebakkramat in the 2016/2017 academic year. This study showed that after being given four thought stopping-based counseling sessions, the experimental group consisting of students with low self-confidence experienced a significant increase in post-test scores compared to the control group. This technique helps participants to stop negative thoughts, both verbally and internally, and replace them with positive affirmations that increase their courage in socializing and actively participating in class.

These findings align with research (Kalimatussadia et al., 2024) showing that thought stopping techniques are effective in reducing body dissatisfaction in college students, helping individuals replace negative thoughts with more positive and healthy ones. The study confirmed that thought stopping is also beneficial in improving other psychological aspects, such as social anxiety, which in turn can strengthen students' self-confidence, including those who have experienced difficult emotional experiences, such as in abusive relationships.

In addition to the self-confidence context, findings from (Lambert et al., 2013) and (Purdon, 2004) emphasize that when evaluating thought suppression or thought-stopping interventions, it is important to measure not only the frequency of intrusive thought return but also the duration of such thoughts. Duration reflects the ability to disengage from intrusive thoughts, providing a more complete understanding of cognitive control. This broader evaluation framework can enrich future research on thought-stopping by ensuring that both dimensions are considered in measuring effectiveness.

In the context of Islamic Education, group counseling using the thought stopping

technique was in line with the principle of tazkiyatun nafs (purification of the soul), as it helped individuals stop negative thoughts and replace them with more positive and solution-oriented thinking patterns. Through this approach, students not only received emotional and cognitive support, but were also guided to rediscover their innate nature as human beings with the potential to rise and improve their circumstances. This approach strengthened the holistic model of Islamic guidance and counseling by integrating psychological, spiritual, and social aspects in a comprehensive manner (Agustin, 2018).

#### **E. Conclusion**

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that group counseling using the thought-stopping technique has proven effective in increasing the self-confidence of students who are victims of abusive relationships. The pre-test and post-test results showed significant changes in the experimental group, where all students experienced increased self-confidence and shifted from the moderate to high category. In contrast, the control group showed no significant changes. The thought-stopping technique helped students replace negative thought patterns associated with their traumatic experiences, thereby increasing their self-confidence and ability to navigate social situations. This finding aligns with previous research showing that the thought-stopping technique is effective in reducing other psychological problems, such as body dissatisfaction and social anxiety. Therefore, group counseling based on the thought-stopping technique can be an effective intervention to help students experiencing the emotional impact of abusive relationships restore and strengthen their self-confidence.

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