



The Effectiveness of Simulation Game Based Group Counseling in Enhancing Students' Emotional Regulation

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Article info

Article history:

Received: 10-01-2026

Revised: 20-02-2026

Accepted: 24-03-2026

Publish: 30-03-2026

Keywords:

Group Counseling;
Simulation games;
emotional regulation;
guidance and counseling.



Abstract

This study focuses on examining the effectiveness of group counseling services utilizing simulation game techniques in managing the emotions of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Mranggen. The intervention consisted of group counseling sessions employing simulation games, conducted over five meetings with a duration of 30–40 minutes per session. The measured indicators included self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Methodologically, this study employed a quantitative approach with a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design. 10 students were selected as subjects through simple random sampling, utilizing a 29-item Likert scale instrument that had been tested for validity and reliability. Based on the results of the t-test, there was an increase in scores for each participant as well as across all emotional management indicators, indicating a significant difference between conditions before and after the intervention. Consequently, in accordance with the hypothesis testing decision-making procedure, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected. Despite several limitations in this study, the overall findings confirm that group counseling services integrating simulation game techniques are proven effective in assisting the emotional management of tenth-grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Mranggen. Therefore, this approach is suitable as a relevant and applicable alternative for social-emotional learning media in the school environment.

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31960/ijolec.v8i2.3338>



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INTRODUCTION

Adolescents is a phase of individual development characterized by significant

physical, emotional, and social changes. During this phase, hormonal fluctuations during puberty often trigger emotional instability. According to (Alvionita & Siregar,

2024) emotion is an internal state that arises spontaneously as a response to one's self-perception of a situation, whether observed or heard. (Khairuzzakiah & Siregar, 2024) define emotion as a psychological manifestation of a person's character and disposition that influences both physiological and subjective states in response to a particular situation. These emotions are unique to each individual and often manifest as intense outbursts of feeling over a brief duration. According to (Widodo et al., 2023) emotions arising from within involve both psychological and physiological aspects. They emerge as a result of stimuli or events-whether neutral, positive, or negative. Generally, emotions are categorized into two types: positive (such as love, pride, and happiness) and negative (such as sadness, anger, and fear). However, if the expression of these emotions becomes excessive, self-control becomes difficult to maintain, making emotional regulation a crucial aspect to understand and apply. (Gross, 2015) state that emotional regulation refers to the way in which a person forms, experiences and expresses their emotions. According to Maulidya et al. (2025), emotional regulation is a vital skill for students in understanding, expressing and managing their feelings in a healthy manner. It forms the foundation of positive social relationships. Students who are able to regulate their emotions tend to be more effective in communication and interaction. Anggraini & Harahap (2023) state that emotional regulation is important to apply in various situations encountered. Particularly in social situations such as at home or at school.

In line with this, based on preliminary data from a questionnaire on students' needs, as well as interviews with the school counsellor, it is indicated that Year 10 students at SMA Negeri 1 Mranggen are experiencing difficulties with emotional regulation. This is evident from the students' behaviour, such as being quick to anger, lacking the ability to manage their emotions when facing conflicts with peers, and struggling to express their feelings appropriately. Guidance counsellors also noted that some students still display impulsive behaviour and are easily offended, particularly when students are in stressful situations, whether in the classroom or within the school environment. (Reinita et al., 2025)

state that there are five indicators of emotional regulation: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. If students are able to meet these five indicators and follow the service approaches provided for each, they will demonstrate adaptive behaviour at school. (Eldesouky et al., 2025) explain that matters relating to emotional regulation can utilise a relevant positive approach to support psychological well-being. Regarding relevant approaches as a form of positive self-development, guidance and counselling services are utilised. (Uce, 2025) emphasises that guidance and counselling services, supported by appropriate emotional regulation strategies, can provide a solution for adolescents in facing emotional challenges. (Mulia et al., 2024) state that guidance and counselling services in schools can assist students in personal, social, academic, and career aspects. For the social aspect, group counseling services are an appropriate choice. (Fikriyani, 2023) defines group counseling as a collective assistance provided to students to gain an understanding of specific topics. Since group counseling aims to simulate real-life situations in a pleasant environment, it enhances students' active engagement with in a group, inspires them, and provides informative service activities, (Nirmala et al., 2023).

In group counselling, the choice of technique is a key aspect of the service delivery process. The selection of simulation games as the technique employed in group counselling serves as the solution adopted in this study, in line with the research objective of determining the effectiveness of group counselling services using simulation games in managing students' emotions. (Syammari & Basuki, 2022) state that games support the development of students' social and emotional aspects. According to (Nabilah et al., 2021), simulation games are described as a method that simulates real-life situations through play, discussion, and simulation. The aim is to understand a concept and apply it to everyday life. This technique is considered innovative and more engaging, particularly for students who are not yet accustomed to conventional group counselling services.

Supporting research conducted by (Firdaus et al., 2024) found that the step-by-step group counseling method successfully improved students' emotional regulation

skills. The use of game-based media such as origami fortune tellers can be an effective strategy in helping students recognise and manage their emotions more effectively. Similar findings by (Sunusi et al., 2025) provide a learning experience that is enjoyable, reflective, and meaningful, so that students not only understand concepts cognitively but also apply them in daily life. These findings reinforce recent research indicating that group counseling using simulation games can be effectively implemented and make a tangible contribution to the development of social-emotional learning models in schools. Given these conditions, this study offers an innovative approach using simulation games in group counselling sessions to focus on students' emotional management. Furthermore, this study aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of simulation games in group counselling for managing the emotions of Year 10 students. It also aims to show that experiential learning methods are effective. Consequently, the delivery of group counselling services becomes more modern and enjoyable.

METHOD

The research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Mranggen with the permission of the school and the consent of the students involved in the study. This research employed a quantitative approach. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) explain that quantitative research involves the determination of the sample, the type of design, data analysis, and the results of a study. This approach utilised a pre-experimental design. (Arib et al., 2024) state that pre-experimental research is a type of experimental study that is not yet fully refined, as there are still external variables influencing the dependent variable. The one-group pretest-posttest design was chosen because it allows for measurement before and after the intervention. Although there are limitations that may affect it, the sample selected is representative of each class in accordance with the sampling technique. The sampling technique used was simple random sampling. According to (Soengeng, 2017), simple random sampling is a random or

arbitrary technique. From a population of 323 students, a sample of ten students was selected to represent each class. As the service provided was group counselling, all members of the population had an equal and equal opportunity to be selected into the sample. The variable in this study, namely students' emotional regulation, is the dependent variable, which is influenced by the independent variable.

Group counselling using simulation games is the independent variable which is the variable that influences the dependent variable. The group counselling sessions were conducted over five sessions, each lasting 30–40 minutes. Different games were used at each session. The games included *Emotion Signals*, *What is the Response?*, *Dream Ladder*, *Support Circle*, and *Find the Similarities*. The service was provided to ten group members led by the group leader, who was the researcher herself. Her role was to provide group counselling and guide group members in achieving the expected goals. The instrument used was the Likert scale (Rahmawati et al., 2026), which consists of response options such as 'Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Disagree', and 'Strongly Disagree'. The use of a four-point Likert scale helps to avoid the tendency to select the 'neutral' option. With these four options, students can select one answer according to their condition, which directly points to a positive or negative response. The 50 items cover favourable and unfavourable aspects representing indicators of emotion regulation; a validity test showed that 29 items were validated. This was followed by a reliability test, yielding a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.726.

Table 1. Reliability Test

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.726	51

According to (Sugiarta et al., 2023), when the Cronbach's alpha value is greater than 0.70, the items can be considered reliable. Following the validity and reliability tests, a normality test was conducted to

determine whether the data were normally distributed or not. In the normality test using the Shapiro-Wilk test, the pre-test data value was 0.020 and the post-test data value was 0.079. Since the pre-test was not normally distributed, non-parametric statistical analysis was employed. According to (Zulkipli et al., 2024), non-parametric statistics form part of inferential statistics that do not require

assumptions regarding specific population parameters. These statistical tests are used in hypothesis testing. The data were analysed using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. According to (Putri & Putri, 2026), this test is recommended when one or both variables are not normally distributed, as it is suitable for paired data, ensuring the results remain valid and reliable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. Table Result of Pre-test and Post-test

No	Name AK	Pre test score	Category	Post test score	Category	Degree of comparison
1	Partisipan 1	72	Low	92	High	20
2	Partisipan 2	71	Low	92	High	21
3	Partisipan 3	77	High	97	Very High	20
4	Partisipan 4	71	Low	90	High	19
5	Partisipan 5	70	Low	90	High	18
6	Partisipan 6	72	Low	92	High	22
7	Partisipan 7	80	High	99	Very High	19
8	Partisipan 8	69	Low	92	High	23
9	Partisipan 9	81	High	98	Very High	17
10	Partisipan 10	71	Low	94	High	23

Based on the chart, participants 8 and 10 showed the greatest improvement, with a difference of 23 points. The smallest improvement, with a difference of 17 points, was shown by participant 9. Participants' average pre-test score was 73.4, whereas their average post-test score was 93.6. This represents an increase in the average score of 20.2 points. Seven students who were

previously in the low category (69–72) managed to move up to the high category (90–94). Three students reached the very high category (97–99). These results reinforce the view that group counselling using simulation games is an effective approach for students who have not yet developed good emotional regulation skills.

Table 2. Table Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test scores by Indicator

No	Indicator	Pre-test Score	Post-test Score	Difference
1	Self awareness	140	177	37
2	Self regulation	117	165	48
3	Motivation	180	237	57
4	Empathy	92	101	9
5	Social Skills	205	256	51

Based on the comparison table for each indicator, the greatest increase was observed in the motivation indicator, with a difference of 57 points. The lowest score was for the empathy indicator, with a difference of 9 points. This indicates that the provision of group counselling services using simulation

games has an impact on each indicator of emotion regulation.

Tests Of Normality

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is a non-parametric test used when one or both variables are not normally distributed. There

was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($Z = -2.809$, $p = 0.005$).

Table 3. Tests of Normality

	Tests of Normality					
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
PRE	.328	10	.003	.812	10	.020
POST	.288	10	.019	.861	10	.079

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Based on the data above, the (Sig.) value in the shaphiro-wilk test shows that the pre-test data is 0.020 and the post-test data is 0.079. for the pre-test data, the (Sig.) value is less than (<0.05), so it can be said that the data is not normally distributed. Therefore, the hypothesis test uses a non-paramethic analysis

method, namely the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

The Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is a non-parametric test used when one or both variables are not normally distributed. There was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($Z = -2.809$, $p = 0.005$).

Table 4. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
POST - PRE	Negative Ranks	0 ^a	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	10 ^b	5.50	55.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	10		

a. POST < PRE

b. POST > PRE

c. POST = PRE

Looking at the ranks table from the Wilcoxon test results, the pattern that emerges is quite clear, there were no negative ranks or ties. This confirms that not a single student experienced a decline in their score, nor did any student's score remain unchanged between the pre-test and post-test. In other words, all research subjects showed an upward trend. More specifically, there were 10 positive ranks with a mean rank of 5.50 and a sum of ranks of 55.00. These figures confirm that all students successfully improved their emotional regulation scores after participating in the simulation game-based group counselling sessions.

Table 5. Statistic Test

Statistics Test	
	POST - PRE
Z	-2.809 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.005

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Based on the results from SPSS, the Sig. (2-tailed) value for the test statistic is 0.005. As the Sig. (2-tailed) value is less than 0.05, in accordance with decision-making procedures, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. Overall, the results of this study confirm the positive impact of the services provided. This is in line with the main objective of the study, namely to prove that group counselling using a simulation games

approach is effective in helping 10th grade students manage their emotions.

Discussion

Emotion regulation refers to the process of shaping one's emotions, including when they are felt and how they are managed and expressed (Gross, 2015). According to (Maulidya et al. 2025), emotional management is a vital skill for students to understand, articulate, and handle feelings in a healthy manner. This study provides empirical evidence that emotional management can be fostered through group guidance using simulation game techniques within guidance and counselling services. (Srianturi et al. 2024) note that this method offers several advantages highly relevant to the context of counselling services. The selection of simulation games is based on their superior appeal compared to conventional methods. (Arifin et al. 2024) assert that simulation games constitute an enjoyable learning method due to their playful nature, meaning students do not feel burdened by heavy prior preparation. Through these activities, students are encouraged to better understand themselves, build empathy, and practise enhanced emotional management skills. The effectiveness of this approach is evident from the comparison of mean pre-test and post-test scores. Furthermore, the Wilcoxon test results indicate a significant difference in students' emotional management before and after receiving the service. A significance value (2-tailed) of .005 was recorded, which is lower than the .05 threshold. Based on hypothesis decision-making criteria, the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, indicating a tangible change in students' emotional management abilities. Data from the pre-test and post-test comparisons across each indicator showed varied results. The indicator with the lowest score was empathy, specifically during the "Support Circle" game, which encourages students to communicate actively and provide peer support. During the simulation, students showed a lack of interest in communicating with the opposite sex and a lack of mutual curiosity. Research by (Fitriani et al. 2024) suggests that interest, enthusiasm, and curiosity are essential emotional components used to drive the student learning process.

Similarly, (DeVito and DeVito. 2024) explain that communication with others is continuous and requires reciprocity; thus, interpersonal communication is vital for all participants.

Conversely, the indicator with the highest score was motivation, observed during the third session with the "Dream Ladder" game. This activity prompted students to map out future steps to achieve their dreams using a step-by-step ladder approach. This process motivates students to prepare their path toward their desired goals. (Enjellica 2025) maintains that self-motivation helps students stay focused on academic goals and remain resilient in the face of challenges. Students with high self-motivation tend to work harder and more consistently. These findings are reinforced by (Harahap et al. 2023), who explain that self-motivation is a key factor for future career success. Strong motivation leads to greater enthusiasm in seeking information, honing skills, and achieving objectives. The group guidance service utilised various games, including *Emotion Signals*, *What is the Response?*, *Dream Ladder*, *Support Circle*, and *Find the Similarities*. These games are designed to create active groups capable of expressing opinions, understanding themselves, and maintaining positive social relationships. Consequently, the researcher employed simulation game techniques within the group guidance delivery. (Nirmala et al. 2023) suggest that group guidance is a decisive service for developing and improving social relationships between students and their peers. This aligns with research by (Luthfiyanti et al. 2020), which explains that group guidance aims to provide understanding and development within a group, utilising group dynamics to achieve goals by changing perspectives, attitudes, and skills.

The simulation game technique used in group guidance has proven effective for student emotional management. This is supported by (Utomo et al. 2018), who noted that the mean post-test score reached 78.5, representing an 84.2% increase in emotional regulation ability following treatment. Further support comes from (Firdaus et al. 2024), who stated that more prominent changes occurred in the second cycle, where the average percentage of students' emotional management ability jumped to 75%. This indicates that the applied group guidance

method succeeded incrementally in improving students' emotional management skills. Overall, the results of this study demonstrate that group guidance services using simulation game techniques are an effective and relevant learning innovation for emotional management in secondary school students. This intervention provides an enjoyable, reflective, and meaningful learning experience, ensuring students do not merely understand emotional concepts cognitively but also learn through direct experience. (Kolb 2014) explains that experiential learning such as service learning, problem-based learning, and team learning is essential because knowledge is gained through direct experience. Thus, students can easily comprehend the material and apply it to their daily lives. These findings reinforce various recent studies and provide a tangible contribution to the development of social-emotional learning models in schools.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, group counselling services that integrate simulation game techniques have proven effective in helping 10th grade students at SMA Negeri 1 Mranggen manage their emotions. However, there was no control group to serve as a comparison with the experimental group. Limitations of this study include the limited range of games provided and the researcher's own delivery style, which requires improvement. Nevertheless, group counselling services using simulation game techniques are worthy of consideration as a relevant and practical alternative medium for social-emotional learning within the school environment.

Based on this study, it is recommended that guidance counsellors implement group counselling services based on simulation games to manage students' emotions using a variety of more enjoyable games. The games can be further developed and made more varied in line with the desired objectives. Future research could also expand the sample size and include a control group to obtain more complex and in-depth results.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Aldea Putri Rahmawati: Conceptualizing research ideas, conducting

field research, data collection, discussing research findings, and drafting the research article. **Siti Fitriana:** Research supervisor, data analysis, discussing research results, and submitting the article. **Padmi Dhyah Yulianti:** Research supervisor, performing data analysis, proofreading, and discussing research results.

Declaration of competing interests

There are no conflicts of interest with any other parties.

Declaration of the use of AI

In the writing of this article, the author used artificial intelligence tools. DeepL and Grammarly were used for translation and grammar checking. The article translation was then reviewed by a human translator for accuracy and clarity of the language used.

Funding statement

This article was self-funded and supported by The Institute for Research and Community Service (LPPM) of Universitas Persatuan Guru Republik Indonesia Semarang.

Acknowledgments

Researchers would like to express his gratitude to all those involved in the completion of this article, as well as to SMA Negeri 1 Mranggen for their full support throughout the research process.

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