



Group Counseling with Expressive Writing Techniques to Reduce Student Academic Stress

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Abstract

Academic stress is a condition that makes students feel pressured because academic demands are difficult to overcome. This research aims to determine the effectiveness of expressive writing techniques in reducing the academic stress of class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut. This study is quantitative-oriented research that applies experimental methods. This research was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut, and the research sample was obtained through the results of a questionnaire using a purposive sampling technique, totaling 6 people. Data collection used the ESSA scale instrument (Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents). Data analysis uses parametric analysis, namely the t test. The results of the research show that the application of group counseling using expressive writing techniques can reduce the academic stress of class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut.

Keywords: *Academic Stress, Group Counseling, Expressive Writing Techniques*

A. Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional phase in development that occurs between childhood and adulthood, characterized by cognitive, social-emotional and physical development that brings a number of significant challenges, growth and opportunities. During adolescence, they complain a lot about school, rules, school assignments, academic demands, taking exams,

and how teachers teach. (Octavia 2020) said that adolescence is a potential period for determining academic success. The potential possessed by this young generation makes their families and environment have high expectations for education which then develops into a burden that is too heavy for them to bear or what is called stress. Stress according to Atkinson (Setyoningrum & Christiana, 2019) refers to an individual's experience of situations that are considered potentially dangerous, and stress can affect both the physical and psychological aspects of the individual. Stress can be seen as a response that arises when someone faces events or conditions that make them feel threatened, so that it can affect their ability to overcome the situation. According to Lazarus (Muhtadini, 2018) stress is the result of the relationship between a person and his environment, which the individual perceives as something that is burdensome or exceeds his abilities, and threatens his health. In simple terms, stress is an individual's reaction to pressure coming from the environment. When individuals feel an imbalance between their needs and abilities, stress arises.

The stress felt by students in an educational context is known as academic stress. Academic stress can be explained as a student's psychological condition that arises due to ongoing social pressure and self-pressure in the school environment which can drain students' psychological resources (Neseliler et al., 2017). Academic stress arises as a result of academic stressors. Academic stressors are pressures that arise from the teaching and learning process such as; pressure to advance to class, lots of assignments, long duration of study, cheating, low achievement, anxiety when facing exams, competition with classmates, and decisions in determining majors and careers (Rahmawati, 2016). Another view about academic stress, as stated by (Ben-zur & Zeidner, 2012) is that this stress comes from environmental factors and challenges in the educational context, such as piling up assignments and exams, social interactions, busy schedules and competition with peers. This can be a challenge and burden for the

students themselves. Academic pressure which is believed to have a significant impact on students is caused by several factors, such as the role of parents, exams, school assignments, worries about the future after graduation, worries about grades, competition with peers or siblings (Stearé et al., 2023). Academic stress experienced by students, if not overcome with effective and appropriate handling strategies, can cause serious negative impacts and even be potentially dangerous. These impacts include self-harming behavior, anxiety and even thoughts of suicide. Rodway et al., noted that academic pressure has increased among adolescents, supported by Lofstedt's findings which suggest that in the same time period there has been an increase in anxiety, depression, self-harm behavior and suicide (Stearé et al., 2023).

Sun, Dunne, Hou and Xu define academic stress as a phenomenon in which students experience tension that arises when they are faced with various demands and pressures in the school environment, while their capacity to cope with these pressures is not aligned or equal. According to (Sun et al., 2011) academic stress can be viewed based on five aspects, namely: (1) pressure from studies, namely pressure from learning activities, including pressure from daily study, parents, academic competition with peers, and worries about future (career), (2) workload, namely the burden of assignments/work, including feelings of being burdened with homework (PR), school assignments and exams, (3) worry about grades, namely worry about grades, including emotions and disappointment with academic grades, (4) self-expectation, namely expectations of oneself, including feelings of pressure and being burdened with self-expectations that cannot be fulfilled, (5) despondency, namely hopelessness, including disappointment and feeling lacking in self-confidence, as well as difficulty concentrating when studying. Effective stress management involves healthy coping strategies, such as exercise, relaxation, social support, and good time management. If academic stress continues and causes serious problems, it is best to seek professional

help such as a counselor through guidance and counseling services (Saputri & Sugiharto, 2020).

Information obtained through a preliminary study conducted with guidance and counseling teachers at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut found that class X students experienced symptoms of academic stress. Based on data from interviews with guidance and counseling teachers, it was stated that there were still many class Guidance and counseling teachers have provided guidance and counseling services for students who are indicated to be experiencing symptoms of academic stress, but this has not been optimal. Guidance and counseling services are not yet optimal because the counseling techniques used are still limited and discussion and lecture methods are more often used. This was confirmed by the results of observations and interviews with class homework (PR), school assignments, as well as feelings of pressure about expectations of oneself. Apart from that, the results of direct observations found that several students had difficulty concentrating during the teaching and learning process, there were students going in and out of class, there were students chatting with friends while the teacher was explaining, then they looked anxious and broke out in cold sweat when asked to come to the front of the class, it was also seen that students lazy to do the assignments given by the teacher and prefer to joke with friends.

Guidance and counseling at school plays an important role in efforts to reduce the effects of academic stress experienced by students. The aim of guidance and counseling is to develop the potential of individuals as optimally as possible, according to their ability to adapt to their environment, whether school, family or community environment (Bastomi, 2020). According to Yusuf & Nurihsan in Bastomi (2019) the Guidance and Counseling process in schools can be successful if it has clear goals to be achieved. Guidance and counseling aims to help students achieve their development goals which include personal-social aspects of learning (academic) and career. Meanwhile, the general objective of Islamic guidance

and counseling according to Mubarok in Bastomi (2017) can be briefly formulated as follows: (1) The general objective of Islamic Counseling is to help the counselee so that he has knowledge of his position and has the courage to make decisions, to carry out an action that is considered good, true and useful, for life in this world and for the benefit of the afterlife. (2) The specific objectives of Islamic counseling guidance are: (a) To help the counselee not to face problems. (b) To help the counselee overcome the problems they are facing. (c) To help the counselee maintain and develop good or already good situations and conditions so that they remain good, so that they will not become a source of problems for themselves and others. In order to achieve counseling goals as expected, of course the counseling and counseling management process must run very well.

Various types of services can be provided to students, one of which is group counseling. According to (Adhiputra, 2015) group counseling services are a support effort aimed at individuals in a group context, which aims to support development and prevent problems, as well as assist them in the process of self-development. Group counseling services will be more optimal in helping students/counselees in reducing their academic stress by using expressive writing techniques.

The expressive writing technique is one of the simplest, most economical intervention options and can be done by anyone. As explained by Pennebaker (In Purnamarini et al., 2016), expressive writing involves the activity of writing down disturbing experiences or traumatic events that trigger hidden emotional feelings, with the aim of finding ways to overcome the trauma. Expressive writing techniques can help individuals reduce stress because writing what they feel can make feelings and biological responses calmer. Writing with feeling and emotion can improve your physical and mental condition for the better. The stages of expressive writing according to Hynes & Thompson (In Purnamarini et al., 2016) are divided into four stages, namely; (1) introduction or initial write, this initial stage functions as a

preparatory step before starting the writing session. Students carry out a relaxation process to increase concentration and achieve peace of mind. This stage aims to stimulate the imagination, relax the body, overcome potential fears that may arise in the counselee, divert attention, and evaluate the emotional condition and level of concentration of the student/counselee. (2) examination or writing exercise, at this stage students/counselees are given the opportunity to write for 15-30 minutes, but this intervention period lasts around 15 minutes. The purpose of this stage is to reveal the reactions of group members when they are faced with certain situations. Participants will be asked to write something freely, following a predetermined topic without needing to pay attention to grammar rules or punctuation. (3) juxtaposition or feedback, at this stage it is used as a reflection tool that encourages the emergence of new understanding and can inspire individual attitudes and actions so that they can develop a deeper understanding of themselves. (4) application to the self, in this final stage students/counselees are invited to apply the new experiences they have gained to real life or current situations. The guidance counselor/counselor's role is to help participants integrate what they have learned while participating in the expressive writing technique intervention. This includes reflecting on what needs to be improved and what should be maintained. In this research, the treatment given was carried out using expressive writing techniques, because there is a belief that the academic stress experienced by students can be minimized with this method. This is in accordance with the view stated (Makaria, 2017) that expressive writing techniques can be used by counselors to encourage students as a means of exploring individual goals and problems.

B. Method

This research applies a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental type of research, namely grouping is not carried out using random techniques (random assignment) but is based on groups that have

been previously formed and based on considerations. This model has a control group, although it is not able to effectively control external variables that influence the course of the experiment (Pakaya et al., 2023). The design used in this research is the Nonequivalent Control Group Design model, in this design the experimental group and control group are not chosen randomly. This experimental design was used because in this study there were two groups, namely the experimental group which would receive expressive writing technique treatment, and the control group which would not be given this treatment. These two groups will be measured twice, namely pre-test and post-test, to see whether or not there is an effect of the treatment given to the research subjects.

Table 1. Nonequivalent Control Group Design Design

<i>Pre-test and Post-test Design Time</i>			
→			
<i>Control Group</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Experimental Treatment (group counseling)</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
<i>Experimental Group</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Experimental Treatment (Expressive Writing technique)</i>	<i>Post-test</i>

The population in this study is Class X students of SMA Negeri 1 Gambut. This population was taken from 3 classes, this was based on advice from the guidance and counseling teacher. So the total population in this study is 90 students divided into 3 classes. Sampling uses a purposive sampling technique, namely a data source sampling technique with certain considerations, for example the person who is considered to know best about what we expect (Sugiyono, 2015). So based on the sampling results obtained from the academic stress scale score data, there were 6 students with academic stress scale scores in the very high category with details of 3 people in the experimental group and 3 others in the control group.

The instrument used to collect data was the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) scale questionnaire developed by Sun, et al., (2011), using a Likert scale. The Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) scale is used to measure high and low levels of academic stress with five indicators that cause academic stress, namely; pressure from study (pressure from learning activities), workload (task load), worry about grades (worries about grades), self-expectation (hopes for oneself), and despondency (despair).

The validity test of the instrument is proven by content or known as content validity. Content validity focuses on providing results on the elements contained in the measuring instrument which are also processed using rational analysis. Content validity is assessed by expert judgment. After testing the validity of the content by experts, the instrument is then revised according to directions in the form of suggestions or input from experts. Whether the instrument is declared valid in terms of content depends on the expert. The indicator that the instrument is valid is when the expert has accepted the format without any revisions. If after repairs and the expert still asks for further repairs, then repairs need to be carried out until the expert actually accepts the instrument without further repairs (Yusup, 2018).

Test the reliability of the instrument using the SPSS for Windows version 26 program, to see whether the answers to the statement items are consistent or not. A questionnaire is said to be reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is > 0.6 . As for the results of the reliability test that was carried out on the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) scale, Cronbach's Alpha = $0.754 > 0.6$ was obtained, so it can be said that the questionnaire is reliable. This means that the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) scale instrument is suitable for use in research as a data collection tool. The data is then analyzed to meet statistical requirements such as normality tests and homogeneity tests. Next, to test the hypothesis the data analysis technique used was the SPSS for Windows version 26 t-test.

C. Discussion

1. Before providing Group Counseling Services with Expressive Writing Techniques

The phenomenon that occurs at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut shows a high level of academic stress in class X students, so steps are needed to overcome this problem. The academic stress felt by students can become an obstacle in their development, because their personal needs may not be met and their focus on studying ultimately has the potential to reduce their academic achievement. Therefore, as a guidance and counseling teacher who wishes to advance students' personal and academic development, it is necessary to provide an approach that is appropriate to the problems being faced by students.

According to Desmita (Barseli et al., 2017) stress related to academic aspects is called academic stress. Academic stress refers to pressure that arises due to factors related to the educational process, such as the number of assignments, exam assessments, cheating behavior, pressure to move up a class, the length of time spent studying, anxiety about exams, exam results, and decisions regarding majors. and career. All of these factors are categorized as academic stressors. Another opinion about academic stress according to (Lal, 2014) is that academic stress can be defined as mental pressure related to academic factors, including a lack of awareness of the potential for failure in the educational context. This can be caused by various demands such as school exams, the responsibility of answering questions from teachers in class, competition and academic achievement with classmates, and also pressure to meet parents' hopes and expectations.

Giving the ESSA (Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents) academic stress questionnaire developed by (Sun, et al., 2011) to class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut before using expressive writing techniques in group counseling services. The indicators used on the ESSA (Educational Stress

Scale for Adolescents) scale include (1) pressure from study, namely pressure from learning activities, including pressure from daily study, parents, academic competition with peers, and worries about the future. future (career), (2) workload, namely the burden of assignments/work, including feelings of being burdened with homework (PR), school assignments and exams, (3) worry about grades, namely worry about grades, including emotions and disappointment with academic grades, (4) self-expectation, namely expectations of oneself, including feelings of pressure and being burdened with self-expectations that cannot be fulfilled, (5) despondency, namely hopelessness, including disappointment and feeling lacking in self-confidence, as well as difficulty concentrating when studying.

The students who were the samples in this study were selected through an academic stress questionnaire assessment with indicators of pressure from learning activities, workload, worry about academic grades, hope for themselves, and hopelessness. The total population in this study was 90 students divided into 3 classes. The distribution of the Educational Stress Scale for Adolescents (ESSA) scale questionnaire instrument developed by Sun et al (2011), was given to the entire population so that an overview of the percentage level of academic stress in class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut was obtained, presented in table 2.

Table 2. Percentage of Student Academic Stress

No	Category	Frequenc y	Percentage	Category
1.	Very low	0	0 %	There isn't any
2.	Low	1	0.1 %	So little
3.	Currently	37	41 %	Pretty much
4.	Tall	46	51 %	Pretty much
5.	Very high	6	0.6 %	So little

The percentage results of 6 students who had academic stress conditions were in the very high category so they were used as research

samples. There were 3 students each in the experimental group and the control group. The students sampled as the experimental group who were treated with expressive writing techniques were MRF, NA, SK and those in the control group were SM, NR, ZA.

Table 3. Student Pre-Test Results in the Research Sample

Name	Pre-Test Score	Category
MRF	71	Very high
NA	72	Very high
SK	68	Very high
BC	75	Very high
NR	68	Very high
ZA	70	Very high

The pre-test results of class , excessive sweat production when facing academic demands, excessive nervousness, and a tendency to lie to people involved in the academic sphere. (2) Workload, task/work load such as feeling burdened with homework, school assignments and exams, difficulty in understanding the material and skipping school as a form of unpreparedness to face academic demands. (3) Worry about Grades, worries about grades include emotions, being more irritable, easily sad and tending to be sensitive, thinking negatively about oneself and the environment, and being disappointed with academic grades. (4) Self-expectation, expectations of oneself, including feelings of pressure and being burdened by unfulfilled self-expectations. (5) Despondency, hopelessness, includes being disappointed and becoming someone who lacks self-confidence, loses interest, and finds it difficult to concentrate when studying.

The pre-test results are in line with the findings in research conducted by (Marfuah, 2021). High levels of academic stress can be recognized by feelings of lack of self-confidence, dissatisfaction and very high expectations regarding academic achievement. Academic stress is pressure that is usually felt by teenagers and has the potential to affect their academic performance.

Even though it is often considered a normal problem, students often express their concerns with negative behaviors, such as lack of focus in following lessons, delays in completing assignments, cheating, and loss of interest in learning.

This is in line with the view expressed by (Nurmaliyah, 2014) who states the negative impacts that occur on individuals if they experience severe and continuous academic stress, such as; (1) cognitive aspect: experiencing difficulty remembering information, having negative thoughts, difficulty understanding lesson material, and difficulty maintaining concentration. (2) emotional aspect: shows symptoms such as anxiety, easily feeling sad, easily angry, frustrated, and becoming more sensitive to feelings. (3) physical reactions: physical symptoms that may arise include reddened skin, difficulty sleeping (insomnia), increased heart rate, headaches, changes in eating patterns, cold sweat, feeling tired and tense. (4) behavioral aspects: changes in behavior, such as being defiant, using harsh language, degrading behavior, a tendency to be lazy and truant, procrastination in completing tasks, and seeking risky actions.

2. After being provided with Group Counseling Services with Expressive Writing Techniques

Expressive writing techniques are a form of writing therapy developed primarily by James W. Pennebaker in the late 1980s. Expressive writing techniques are part of expressive therapy that focuses on emotions, where emotional feelings are released through writing and can increase new experiences for individuals. According to (Makaria, 2017) counselors can use expressive writing techniques to encourage students as a means of exploring individual goals and problems.

After applying the expressive writing technique, a post-test was carried out. The results obtained were that the counselee's academic stress was reduced to the low category from initially being in the very high category.

Table 4. Description of the Differences in Pre-Test and Post-Test Results in the Academic Stress Levels of Experimental Group Students

Name	Experimental Group		Score Difference	Information
	Pre-Test	Post-Test		
MRF	71	39	32	Decrease
NA	72	34	38	Decrease
SK	68	40	28	Decrease
Average	70.3	37.6	32.6	

Based on table 4, it shows that the general description of the academic stress of class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut for the experimental group, shows that the previous score obtained was the average academic stress for class. Then measurements were carried out at the post-test stage on experimental group students, where at this post-test stage there was a significant decrease from the pre-test results so that an average score of 37.6 was obtained. With the difference between the pre-test and post-test in the experimental group, namely 32.6.

Changes in the pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group's academic stress level were due to the provision of a group counseling process using expressive writing techniques in 6 stages. Significant changes occurred in MRF students in reducing the level of academic stress with an initial score of 71 to 39, namely in the workload and despondency indicators, namely task load and hopelessness. For NA students, there was a significant change in reducing the level of academic stress with an initial score of 72 to 34, namely on the worry about grades indicator, namely worry about grades, where NA students were more able to control their emotions and were able to think rationally. For SK students there was a significant change in reducing the level of academic stress with an initial score of 68 to 40, namely on the worry about grades indicator, namely worry about grades, where SK students were more able to control their emotions and were more grateful for the grades they obtained.

Based on the description of the data above, this means that students in the experimental group experienced changes so that the post-test results showed a decline from the very high category to the low category after being given group counseling treatment using expressive writing techniques. This decrease occurred because expressive writing techniques taught clients to combine their cognitive, affective and motoric aspects. This integration process begins by changing an individual's view from initially irrational to rational. After individuals have a more rational mindset, their feelings also experience a transformation towards a more positive direction. Changes in cognitive and affective dimensions also have an impact on changing behavior towards more adaptive behavior. Cognitively, individuals are helped by expressive writing in remembering and increasing their brain capacity. In another case, (Park et al., 2014) found that the anxiety felt by students before and after the exam could be reduced by expressive writing. Expressive writing can also improve a person's social interaction.

Table 5. Description of Differences in Results *Pre-Test and Post-Test Academic Stress Levels of Control Group Students*

Name	Control Group		Score Difference	Information
	<i>Pre-Test</i>	<i>Post-Test</i>		
BC	75	77	2	Increase
NR	68	72	4	Increase
ZA	70	75	5	Increase
Average	71	74.6	3.6	

In table 5, there is an increase in the total score per subject, although it is not very significant. SM students whose initial score when given the pre-test was 75 increased to 77 after being given the post-test, the highest score was on the pressure from study indicator, namely pressure from learning activities such as burdensome parental expectations. NR students whose initial score when given the pre-test was 68 increased to 72 after being given the post-test, the highest score was on the pressure from study and self-expectation indicators, namely pressure from learning activities and self-

expectations such as parents' expectations and being burdened with expectations for themselves. Alone. ZA students whose initial score when given the pre-test was 70 increased to 75 after being given the post-test, the highest score was on the pressure from study indicator, namely pressure from learning activities such as difficulty understanding the material and expectations from parents.

After being given a pre-test, the control group did not receive intervention in the form of expressive writing techniques. Instead, the researcher provided them with discussion techniques and attempted to create openness in sharing their respective experiences and personal information. From this explanation it can be concluded that there was no significant change in the control group who did not receive expressive writing intervention, as shown by an increase in students' academic stress scores which were still in the very high category.

3. Group Counseling with Expressive Writing Techniques Effectively Reduces Students' Academic Stress

Group counseling using expressive writing techniques to reduce students' academic stress occurred because researchers saw that many students in Indonesia showed symptoms of academic stress. Based on survey data conducted by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (KPPPA) of more than 3,200 elementary to high school children in July 2020, 13% of respondents experienced symptoms that lead to mild to severe depressive disorders. Data taken by surveying children in 34 provinces also showed emotional symptoms in the form of sadness and irritability (BBC 2021 Edition). There are many strategies used by guidance and counseling teachers to help students reduce academic stress, but in this study the strategy used was group counseling with expressive writing techniques. This research was conducted based on the problem of whether group counseling

using expressive writing techniques is effective in reducing students' academic stress.

It was previously mentioned that the research carried out hypothesis testing using the t test to identify whether or not there were differences in academic stress levels before and after being given group counseling treatment using expressive writing techniques.

Table 6. Paired Sample t Test Results

		Paired Differences					Q	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
Pair								Lower	Upper
1	Pre_Ex- Post_Ex	32,667	5,033	2,906	20,163	45,170	11,241	2	,008
2	Pre_Control- Post_Control	-3,667	1,528	,882	-7,461	.128	-4,158	2	,053

Based on the output of pair 1, the Sig (2-tailed) value of 0.008 is smaller than 0.05 Sig (2-tailed) < 0.05 , so it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the average level of student academic stress for the pre-test and post-test. in the experimental group who were given expressive writing technique treatment. Meanwhile, based on the output pair 2, the Sig (2-tailed) value of 0.053 is greater than 0.05 Sig (2-tailed) > 0.05 , it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in the average level of student academic stress for the pre-test and post-test. test in the control group who were not given treatment.

Table 7. Results of Average Differences in Post-Test Data for the Experimental Group and Control Group

Group Statistics

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Stress Results Academic	Post-Test Experiment	3	37.67	3,215	1,856
	Control Post-Test	3	74.67	2,517	1,453

Based on the statistical analysis carried out, the results showed that there was a significant difference between the group that received treatment using expressive writing techniques and the group that did not receive it. The hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the hypothesis (Ha) is accepted. From this explanation, it can be concluded that there is a significant difference in the effect of expressive writing technique treatment on academic stress levels between groups that received treatment and those that did not. This indicates that the application of Group Counseling with Expressive Writing Techniques is effective in reducing student academic stress at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut. The academic stress of students in the experimental group which was initially in the very high category, after the intervention became in the low category. On the other hand, the control group which was not given intervention remained in the very high category.

One of the factors that most influences student academic results is stress or anxiety (Hines, 2011). Students who are very anxious and in stressful situations will be vulnerable to academic failure, because anxiety will interfere with cognitive processing related to working memory activities (Hines, 2011). Expressive writing is a simple method where someone writes down their feelings related to life experiences that affect them emotionally or are traumatic. Through this writing process, individuals are given the opportunity to express very personal and deep thoughts and feelings about events that are sad or leave an impression in their lives. When participants freely wrote down their experiences and feelings, some of them felt carried

away by emotions such as crying or feeling very angry. However, ultimately this process can have a meaningful impact.

The implementation of the expressive writing technique at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut is carried out in accordance with the steps contained in the expressive writing technique, namely; recognition/initial writing, examination/writing exercise, juxtaposition/feedback, application to the self.

The first stage is recognition/initial write. The results obtained from the recognition/initial write worksheet were that several counsees shared unpleasant experiences regarding their family in certain situations, some shared their fears about academic grades not being in line with their expectations, and there were students who felt inferior because of their lack of understanding regarding what they thought were lessons. very difficult. In general, clients are able to express themselves well through their writing. The results obtained at this stage are that the client is able to explore thoughts related to their life experiences and write expressively.

The second stage is examination/writing exercise. The results obtained in this session, the counselee was able to explain the academic stressors that had been pressing on him. Counsees can write well about the pressure of learning activities and the workload they face both at school and at home. Apart from that, the counselee is also able to express the personal obstacles they face so that the counselee is unable to fulfill the assigned tasks or academic standards.

The third stage is juxtaposition/feedback. The results of this stage regarding the counselee's self-constraints generally include pessimism about completing assignments and academic grades, fear of being a burden in group assignments, lack of family support. After the counselee realizes that his thoughts or cognition are wrong, the counselor then instructs him to explore his thoughts and express them in writing about his hopes for the future when he obtains a new perspective. Apart from that, the counselee is also able to express and explain hopes for what will happen in the future.

The fourth stage is application to the self. The results obtained at this meeting were that the counselee had a behavior change plan and was able to develop responsible and effective expectations for the personal obstacles he faced, and the counselee was also able to apply his hopes for the future to himself and had a strong self-commitment.

The results of Juanita Argudo's (2020) research entitled "Expressive Writing to Relieve Academic Stress at University Level" show that expressive writing helped participants significantly reduce the level of academic stress caused by carrying out academic assignments, anxiety and stress (Argudo, 2020).

Writing about anxiety or concerns regarding academic performance can increase working memory activity to help students better identify, differentiate, and understand their emotional experiences (Park et al., 2014). In research conducted by (Koschwanez et al., 2017) using expressive writing to heal wounds in patients undergoing bariatric surgery, 76 patients were asked to write down traumatic experiences throughout their lives and how they lived their daily lives. During the two-week surgery period, by carrying out expressive writing for 20 minutes per day for three consecutive days, it was proven that expressive writing significantly reduced post-operative stress levels. Another research using expressive writing intervention on students was conducted by (Ruliansyah, 2015) with a sample of 32 students of class XI Science 4 SMA Negeri 7 Yogyakarta, showing that expressive writing can improve students' coping strategies.

When writing feelings about stressors, students can process thoughts and organize thought patterns (Hines, 2011). Students use words that show what they know, and consider the possible causes of their feelings of anxiety or stress. Pennebaker & Harber (Hines, 2011) say that in writing cognitive processing occurs which helps organize and organize memories, so that students can develop more adaptive schemes related to their stressors. As students' anxiety about their academic performance decreases, the

possibility of them making mistakes in carrying out academic activities will also decrease, so that feelings of pressure can decrease, they feel more confident, and they can prepare themselves better. Other benefits include students' minds feeling more relieved, relaxed, calm because they have let go of bad thoughts, burdens that are blocking them.

By implementing expressive writing techniques, you can create an effective understanding of emotions through cognitive strategies that change the meaning of stressful situations. Student anxiety or worry about their performance as well as parental pressure and expectations are the main factors that cause students to experience academic stress. So, with expressive writing techniques, students can express perceptions and feelings that have not been conveyed, because writing provides a platform for students to express their feelings. Students' experience in creating and creating writing makes them focus and concentrate on change, and imagine the best possibilities in the future and then write about it.

When individuals express their feelings in writing, they can re-experience the emotions associated with the events written down. This allows them to reassess every aspect of the events written about and cast their thinking into a new perspective. The impact greatly influences an individual's psychological condition, both when feelings make them depressed (negative) and those that make them happy (positive). When positive feelings are expressed by individuals, this can strengthen the positive impact of the event and invite feelings of gratitude and make these feelings even more valuable.

In expressive writing activities, students experience four things (Makaria, 2017). First, students imagine, relax, focus their thoughts, and express emotions and thoughts that have accumulated in daily life (catharsis). Second, students can explore their thoughts, actions, and feelings regarding a situation that the student has experienced, is currently experiencing, or will experience. When students reflect on themselves, it encourages students to

gain understanding, awareness and inspiration for new behavior. Fourth, students apply new understanding, awareness and behavior directly to their daily lives.

The therapeutic benefits of writing activities are that it can improve and improve individual physical, emotional and cognitive functions, reduce stress, and help obtain new ideas for conflict resolution (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016). The cognitive process in expressive writing can help organize memory structures and create a more adaptive schema about a stressful event, thereby helping students gain insight. Another benefit is that students can freely express their thoughts and feelings, without fear of social response, so that students feel safe and comfortable to express (Curry, 2011).

The effectiveness of expressive writing techniques applied at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut is in line with the results of research conducted by (Muhtadini, 2018) in his research entitled "Using Expressive Writing to Reduce Academic Stress in Full Day School Middle School (SMP) Students." In this research, Muhtadini (2018) used expressive writing as a method to reduce high levels of academic stress by writing down burdensome feelings and thoughts for 15-30 minutes per day for three consecutive days. The results of the study showed that there was a significant reduction in academic stress in the experimental group so it can be concluded that expressive writing is effective in reducing academic stress. Another study conducted by (Frattaroli et al., 2011) also proved that expressive writing about deepest feelings and thoughts was effective in reducing stress symptoms before exams and increasing exam scores with research subjects of 104 students taking postgraduate entrance tests.

4. Research Limitations

There are several limitations to the study. First, the amount of literature (books, journals and research results) that combines expressive writing techniques with academic stress is still small. The second limitation,

this research is only able to measure the level of academic stress through questionnaires, it is not able to measure changes in students' academic stress behavior in everyday life. The third limitation, in implementing group counseling using expressive writing techniques, clear directions, examples and stimuli are still needed to make students better understand their feelings at that time.

During the research process, there were several things to note in carrying out the expressive writing technique process to reduce students' academic stress through group counseling services. These notes are things that need to be considered and also suggestions for future researchers. Based on the research process in the field, there are several things that need to be considered by future researchers, namely; (1) This research only uses class (2) So that the implementation of group counseling can be carried out as planned in the research guidelines using expressive writing techniques to reduce students' academic stress, counselors should have an understanding of what academic stress is and what triggers academic stress and what its impacts are. from academic stress and about basic concepts regarding expressive writing techniques so that counseling can run as expected. (3) To achieve the expected goals, a researcher should be able to carry out reporting and attending as well as strong skills so that it can facilitate the use of expressive writing techniques.

D. Conclusion

Before being provided with group counseling services using expressive writing techniques, the academic stress level of class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut was in the very high category. After being given treatment through group counseling services using expressive writing techniques, the academic stress level of class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut during the post-test in the experimental group decreased and was in the low category. Meanwhile, the control group which was not given

expressive writing technique treatment did not experience any significant changes, in other words it remained in the very high category. Based on calculations using the t test via SPSS for Windows version 26, it can be concluded that the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the working hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. These results lead to the conclusion that there is a significant influence between counsees who received expressive writing technique treatment and those who did not receive expressive writing technique treatment on students' academic stress levels. In this way, group counseling using expressive writing techniques is effective in reducing academic stress for class X students at SMA Negeri 1 Gambut.

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