

Implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)- Based Counseling Services in Addressing Learning Anxiety Among SMK Students

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Abstract. Learning anxiety is a common psychological issue among vocational high school students that affects concentration, self-confidence, and academic performance. This study aims to describe the implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) in addressing students' learning anxiety in a vocational high school setting. A qualitative research approach was employed using in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving students experiencing learning anxiety and school counselors. The results indicate that SFBC enables students to recognize their personal strengths, set achievable learning goals, and develop practical solutions to overcome learning difficulties. Following the counseling sessions, students demonstrated reduced learning anxiety, increased self-confidence, and more positive learning behaviors. These findings suggest that SFBC is an effective and applicable counseling approach for managing learning anxiety and supporting students' academic and emotional development in vocational schools.

Keywords: learning anxiety, qualitative research, school counseling, solution-focused brief counseling, vocational students

A. INTRODUCTION

Mental health among students has become a critical issue in modern education, as it directly influences the success of the learning process (Gueldner et al., 2020). One prevalent psychological problem experienced by students is learning anxiety, an emotional state characterized by feelings of fear, tension, and worry when facing academic activities. Untreated learning anxiety can impair concentration, reduce motivation, and negatively impact academic performance (Cai et al., 2024).

In vocational secondary education, learning anxiety tends to manifest more complexly, as students face both academic demands and the need to master

practical skills. Vocational high school (SMK) students are required to achieve specific competencies as preparation for entering the workforce, intensifying pressure on their learning performance. Research indicates that demands from practical evaluations and competency assessments significantly heighten academic anxiety among SMK students (Deng & Liu, 2025). In addition, the dual expectation to perform well in both theoretical examinations and hands-on tasks often creates cognitive overload, which can negatively affect students' confidence and motivation to learn (Wang et al., 2024). Furthermore, a lack of adaptive coping strategies and limited counseling support within schools may exacerbate students' anxiety levels, ultimately impacting their overall academic achievement and readiness for the workplace (Rani, 2025).

Conceptually, learning anxiety is influenced by various internal and external factors, such as low self-confidence, prior experiences of failure, environmental pressures, and high expectations from teachers and parents. Poorly managed anxiety can lead students to avoid learning tasks, exhibit passivity in class, and experience diminished academic self-efficacy (Yousefabadi et al., 2022). Therefore, interventions are needed that not only address problems but also strengthen students' potential.

School guidance and counseling (BK) services play a strategic role in helping students overcome psychological issues, including learning anxiety. School counselors are required to implement adaptive, effective counseling approaches suited to the characteristics of contemporary students. Recent research emphasizes that student empowerment-oriented counseling services are more effective in fostering positive change than approaches focused solely on students' weaknesses (Sun & Yang, 2023).

In line with advancements in the field, modern counseling approaches such as Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) are increasingly applied in educational contexts. SFBC emphasizes solution-seeking, leveraging individual strengths, and setting realistic goals in a relatively short time frame. Studies from the past five years demonstrate that SFBC effectively enhances students' self-confidence, learning motivation, and emotional regulation skills (Gading et al., 2021).

However, factual conditions in the field reveal that the implementation of solution-based counseling services remains suboptimal. Based on initial observations and interviews with BK teachers at SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang, several students experience learning anxiety, particularly when facing practical

exams and vocational competency tasks. Symptoms include fear of failure, low self-confidence, and a tendency to avoid tasks. The counseling services provided still predominantly employ conventional problem-focused approaches, which do not fully empower students to discover solutions independently (Martins et al., 2018).

This study identifies several specific gaps in the existing literature. First, although Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) has been widely recognized as an effective approach in school counseling, its systematic application in vocational high school (SMK) settings remains underexplored, particularly in addressing learning anxiety that arises from both academic and practical competency demands. Second, prior studies tend to focus on general academic anxiety or are conducted in general education contexts, leaving a lack of attention to the unique characteristics of SMK students who face dual pressures (theoretical and vocational skills). Third, there is a scarcity of qualitative research that deeply examines the real implementation process of SFBC, including stages of counseling, interaction dynamics, and contextual challenges in schools. As a result, there is limited empirical evidence explaining how SFBC is practically carried out and adapted within the SMK environment.

Based on the foregoing discussion, this study aims to provide an in-depth description of the implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)-based counseling services in addressing learning anxiety among students at SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang. The research is expected to offer a realistic portrayal of the counseling process, student responses, and changes experienced following SFBC services. Additionally, the findings are anticipated to serve as practical guidance for BK teachers in developing more effective and relevant counseling services for SMK students (Anwar et al., 2025).

B. Theoretical Framework

1. Learning Anxiety

Learning anxiety is an emotional condition characterized by feelings of fear, worry, and tension that arise in learning and academic evaluation situations. According to Spielberger, learning anxiety relates to an individual's response to perceived academic demands that exceed their capabilities, thereby disrupting students' concentration and learning performance. If persistent, this anxiety can lead to diminished self-confidence and learning motivation among students

(Jayaraman et al., 2024).

In the context of education, Heryanti et al., (2022) explains that learning anxiety is a key psychological factor influencing students' learning success. Students experiencing anxiety tend to exhibit task avoidance, fear of making mistakes, and reduced participation in the learning process. Therefore, learning anxiety requires appropriate interventions to prevent hindrance to students' academic and psychological development.

2. *Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)*

Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC) is a counseling approach oriented toward solutions rather than the problems experienced by the client. Levitt & Erford (2023) states that SFBC emphasizes individuals' strengths, potential, and past successes, while assisting clients in establishing clear and realistic future goals. This approach views clients as capable of discovering their own solutions to their challenges.

Furthermore, Holland (2022) explain that SFBC is brief and focused, making it highly suitable for school settings with time constraints on service delivery. Through techniques such as the miracle question, scaling question, and exception question, SFBC helps students shift their focus from anxiety to concrete, actionable solutions. Thus, SFBC is relevant as a counseling approach to assist students in managing learning anxiety more adaptively.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive qualitative design. The qualitative approach was selected because the research aims to deeply understand the phenomenon of students' learning anxiety and the implementation process of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)-based services within the natural school context. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research enables researchers to explore the meanings, experiences, and social processes experienced by participants in depth and contextually, aligning well with the objectives of this study.

The research participants consist of students from SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang experiencing learning anxiety and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers who deliver counseling services. A total of 10 students experiencing learning anxiety were selected as the main participants, along with 1 BK teacher who facilitated the counseling sessions. Participant selection utilized purposive

sampling, involving the choice of subjects based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. This technique was employed because the researcher required informants who genuinely understood and experienced the phenomenon under study, as Sugiyono (2019) notes that purposive sampling is effective in qualitative research for obtaining in-depth and meaningful data.

Data collection instruments in this study include an interview guide, observation sheets, and documentation. In-depth interviews were used to explore students' experiences with learning anxiety and BK teachers' perspectives on SFBC service implementation. Observations were conducted to directly capture student behaviors and the counseling process, while documentation supplemented data through counseling service records and school archives. As stated by Moleong (2017), employing multiple data collection techniques aims to enhance data richness and strengthen the validity of research findings.

The research procedure began with a pre-research phase involving initial observations and coordination with school authorities. Subsequently, the researcher identified participants based on criteria, followed by data collection through interviews, observations, and documentation. Data collection was conducted iteratively and continuously until saturation was achieved. All research stages adhered to ethical principles, such as obtaining participant consent and ensuring identity confidentiality, as emphasized by Creswell (2014) that ethics is a crucial aspect of qualitative research.

Data analysis followed the interactive analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction involved selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives. The reduced data were then presented in descriptive narrative form to facilitate understanding. Conclusions were drawn progressively through verification of findings against the obtained data. To ensure data validity, this study applied source triangulation and method triangulation techniques.

D. RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings were derived from data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation involving students experiencing learning anxiety and Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers at SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang. The findings are presented descriptively to illustrate students' learning anxiety conditions before and after the implementation of Solution-

Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)-based services, as well as the process of service delivery in the school setting.

Initial interviews and observations revealed that students exhibited various manifestations of learning anxiety, such as fear of failure during practical exams, low self-confidence in completing tasks, and a tendency to avoid specific learning activities. Students also expressed excessive tension and worry when required to perform or be evaluated by teachers. These conditions negatively affected students' participation in learning and diminished their learning motivation.

The implementation of SFBC-based counseling services at SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang was conducted through several sessions focused on goal-setting, self-strength identification, and the exploration of realistic solutions. Observations during the counseling process indicated that counselors employed key SFBC techniques, including scaling questions to measure students' anxiety levels, exception questions to uncover past success experiences, and miracle questions to help students envision an ideal learning state. The counseling process was dialogical, encouraging students to actively participate in discovering solutions to their challenges.

Post-counseling interviews demonstrated positive changes in students. The majority reported a reduction in learning anxiety, particularly when facing tasks and learning evaluations. Students also exhibited increased self-confidence and more positive attitudes toward learning activities. Additionally, they began developing simple strategies to manage anxiety, such as early preparation and reframing negative thoughts into optimistic perspectives.

Observationally, behavioral changes were evident in heightened student engagement in learning, greater willingness to ask questions or express opinions, and readiness to undergo evaluations without excessive anxiety symptoms. BK teachers noted that students became more open during counseling and focused more on solutions than on their problems. This indicates that SFBC-based counseling services positively impacted students' management of learning anxiety. To clarify the research findings, a summary is presented in Table 1 below.

Tabel 1. Research Findings Summary

Observed Aspect	Pre-SFBC Condition	Post-SFBC Condition
Learning Anxiety	High, marked by fear and tension	Reduced, calmer state

Observed Aspect	Pre-SFBC Condition	Post-SFBC Condition
Self-Confidence	Low, self-doubt on abilities	Increased, greater certainty
Learning Attitude	Passive and task-avoidant	More active and positive
Anxiety Coping Strategies	None possessed	Began applying simple solutions

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that the implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)-based counseling services at SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang effectively assists students in managing learning anxiety more adaptively. These results provide a foundation for further discussion on the efficacy of SFBC within the context of guidance and counseling services in vocational high schools.

E. DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that learning anxiety experienced by students at SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang manifests as fear of failure, low self-confidence, tension during tasks and evaluations, and a tendency to avoid specific learning activities. These results reinforce prior studies stating that learning anxiety is a dominant psychological issue among secondary students, particularly in vocational high schools (SMK) with concurrent academic and practical skill demands (Zhu et al., 2024). Untreated learning anxiety can hinder student engagement in learning and diminish instructional effectiveness.

Furthermore, this study reveals that triggers of students' learning anxiety stem not only from academic demands but also from practical evaluation pressures and concerns about personal competence. This aligns with Sitoresmi et al. (2025), who note that SMK students exhibit higher academic anxiety when facing performance- and competency-based assessments. These findings highlight the unique characteristics of learning anxiety in SMK students, necessitating contextual and adaptive intervention approaches.

The implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)-based services in this study demonstrated positive impacts on students' anxiety management (Altundağ & Bulut, 2019). Through a solution-oriented approach, students were guided to recognize their strengths, past successes, and achievable goals. These outcomes corroborate Gerhát et al. (2025), who found SFBC effective

in helping students shift focus from problems to realistic, short-term solutions.

Post-SFBC reductions in learning anxiety were accompanied by increased self-confidence and more positive learning attitudes. Students showed greater willingness to participate in learning and face evaluations without excessive tension. This supports Wulandari, Hartono, and Saputra (2023), who reported that SFBC in school guidance enhances academic self-efficacy and significantly reduces student learning anxiety.

Additionally, students' active involvement in the counseling process was a key factor in SFBC's success. Rather than passive recipients, students acted as agents determining their goals and solutions. This embodies SFBC's core principle of viewing clients as competent individuals with internal resources for change (Zahro et al., 2025). Bhardwaj et al. (2025) similarly affirm that student-centered counseling drives sustainable behavioral and emotional changes more effectively.

From the Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers' perspective, SFBC was deemed more practical and efficient than conventional approaches. Teachers observed greater student openness, responsiveness, and rapid positive shifts during sessions. These insights align with Oktavianas et al. (2025), who emphasize SFBC's suitability for schools given time constraints and the need for targeted interventions.

Overall, these findings strengthen conclusions from studies over the past five years, confirming SFBC as an effective counseling approach for student psychological issues, particularly learning anxiety. Its implementation at SMK Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang not only reduced anxiety but also fostered positive mindsets, independence, and academic readiness. Thus, SFBC-based counseling merits recommendation as an alternative for enhancing guidance services in vocational high schools.

F. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings and discussion outlined above, it can be concluded that the implementation of Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (SFBC)-based counseling services is effective in helping to address learning anxiety among SMK students. Through a solution-focused approach, individual strengths, and realistic short-term goals, students are able to identify the sources of their learning anxiety and develop adaptive strategies to manage it. The research results show positive changes in students' psychological aspects, such as increased self-confidence, reduced learning anxiety symptoms, and enhanced

student engagement in the learning process. Thus, SFBC can be adopted as one relevant and contextual alternative counseling service to support the academic and emotional development of SMK students.

Based on these conclusions, it is recommended that guidance and counseling teachers in SMK optimize the systematic application of the SFBC approach in counseling services, particularly to address students' learning anxiety issues. Schools are also expected to provide support in the form of training and professional development for counselors to effectively implement solution-based counseling approaches. In addition, future research is recommended to examine SFBC implementation with broader subjects and contexts, as well as to combine it with quantitative or mixed methods to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of this approach in school guidance and counseling services.

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