



The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Using Cognitive Restructuring Techniques in Improving TikTok Social Media Behavior at State Senior High School 1 Pasir Limau Kapas

Nurhayani¹, Fitra Herlinda²

^{1,2}Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, Indonesia

✉ anoy95831@gmail.com *

Article Information:

Received May 21, 2026

Revised May 23, 2026

Accepted June 12, 2026

Keywords:

Group Counseling, Cognitive Restructuring, TikTok Social Media Behavior

Abstract

This study is motivated by the widespread use of TikTok social media among students, which often leads to less responsible online behavior, such as being easily influenced by negative content, lacking self-control, and failing to consider the impact of posts and comments. This study aims to: (1) determine students' TikTok social media behavior before the implementation of group counseling services using cognitive restructuring techniques, (2) determine students' TikTok social media behavior after the implementation of the service, and (3) examine the effectiveness of group counseling services using cognitive restructuring techniques in improving students' TikTok social media behavior. This research employs a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental method using a one-group pretest-posttest design. The population consists of 98 students, while the sample includes 8 students selected using purposive sampling. Data were collected using a TikTok social media behavior questionnaire based on a Likert scale that had been tested for validity and reliability. Data analysis was conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with the assistance of SPSS version 25. The results of the study show that before the implementation of group counseling using cognitive restructuring techniques, students' positive TikTok social media behavior was in the low category, with 5 students (62.5%), and in the very low category, with 3 students (37.5%). After the implementation of the counseling service, students' behavior improved to the very high category, with 7 students (87.5%), and the high category, with 1 student (12.5%). The results of the Wilcoxon test show a Z value of -2.521 with an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.012, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, group counseling services using cognitive restructuring techniques are proven to be effective in improving students' TikTok social media behavior.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has fundamentally transformed the way adolescents communicate, acquire information, and spend their leisure time. Digital technology has become an inseparable part of students' daily lives, particularly through the widespread use of social networking platforms.

How to cite:

Nurhayani, N., Herlinda, F. (2026). The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Using Cognitive Restructuring Techniques in Improving TikTok Social Media Behavior at State Senior High School 1 Pasir Limau Kapas. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Education*, 2(2), 92-99.

E-ISSN:

3109-0303

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34125/jomre.v2i2.55>

Published by:

Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Education

Social media applications have created opportunities for communication, entertainment, learning, and self-expression; however, they have also introduced various psychological, behavioral, and educational challenges that require serious attention from educators and counseling professionals. Recent technological developments have made social media platforms increasingly accessible through smartphones, enabling adolescents to remain connected almost continuously throughout the day (Keles et al., 2020).

Among the numerous social media platforms currently available, TikTok has emerged as one of the most popular applications among adolescents worldwide. Its short-form video format, personalized recommendation algorithm, and interactive features encourage prolonged engagement and frequent usage. According to recent digital media reports, TikTok has become one of the world's fastest-growing social networking platforms, attracting billions of active users, with adolescents representing the largest demographic group (DataReportal, 2025). The platform offers various educational, creative, and entertainment benefits by allowing users to produce digital content, collaborate with peers, and access diverse information. Nevertheless, these advantages are accompanied by several risks associated with excessive and uncontrolled use.

Excessive TikTok use has become a growing concern within educational settings because prolonged exposure to social media may negatively affect students' academic performance, psychological well-being, and interpersonal relationships. Studies have consistently reported that excessive engagement with social media is associated with decreased concentration, poor academic achievement, sleep disturbances, emotional instability, reduced face-to-face communication, and increased dependency on digital interaction (Andreassen, 2021; Boer et al., 2021). Adolescents who spend excessive amounts of time browsing social media often experience difficulties regulating their learning schedules and managing their daily responsibilities.

The increasing popularity of TikTok among students has also generated new behavioral challenges for school counselors. Many students report spending several hours daily watching or creating videos, often at the expense of academic activities and family interactions. The platform's sophisticated recommendation algorithm continuously presents personalized content, making it difficult for users to disengage voluntarily. Consequently, many adolescents develop irrational beliefs regarding the necessity of remaining constantly connected, fearing they may miss entertaining or socially relevant content if they reduce their online activity. Such cognitive distortions frequently contribute to problematic social media behavior and may gradually develop into habitual patterns of excessive use.

From a cognitive-behavioral perspective, excessive social media use is not solely influenced by environmental factors but is also maintained by maladaptive thinking patterns. According to cognitive theory proposed by Beck (2021), individuals' emotions and behaviors are largely determined by their interpretations of situations rather than the situations themselves. When adolescents develop irrational beliefs such as "I will lose my friends if I do not use TikTok every day" or "Watching TikTok helps me escape all my problems," these automatic thoughts reinforce excessive engagement with the application. Consequently, modifying maladaptive cognitive processes becomes an important strategy for promoting healthier behavioral patterns.

Cognitive Restructuring (CR) is one of the principal techniques within Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) designed to identify, challenge, and replace irrational thoughts with more adaptive and realistic thinking. The technique encourages individuals to recognize negative automatic thoughts, evaluate their validity, and develop healthier cognitive responses that support positive behavioral change (Beck, 2021). Within school counseling practice, cognitive restructuring has been widely implemented to address anxiety, academic stress, emotional problems, and various behavioral issues among adolescents because it empowers students to regulate their own thoughts and behaviors more effectively.

In addition to cognitive restructuring, group counseling provides an appropriate intervention setting for adolescents experiencing similar behavioral problems. Group counseling enables participants to share experiences, receive emotional support, develop interpersonal skills, and learn adaptive coping strategies collaboratively. Through positive group dynamics, students gain opportunities to recognize that others experience similar difficulties, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and increasing motivation to change. Previous research has demonstrated that group counseling interventions significantly improve students' emotional regulation, self-control, and social competence while reducing problematic behaviors in educational environments (Corey, 2021).

The integration of cognitive restructuring techniques into group counseling offers several advantages over individual interventions. During group sessions, participants can observe peers challenging irrational beliefs, practice adaptive thinking collectively, and receive constructive feedback from both counselors and fellow group members. Such collaborative cognitive learning strengthens behavioral change because participants repeatedly apply positive self-instruction in realistic social contexts. Furthermore, structured group counseling sessions facilitate continuous reinforcement of adaptive thinking patterns through mutual encouragement and shared experiences.

Several empirical studies have investigated interventions for problematic social media use among adolescents. Research conducted by Malimbe et al. (2021) reported that excessive TikTok use negatively influenced students' learning motivation and classroom participation. Similarly, Nurmala et al. (2022) found that intensive social media engagement contributed to behavioral changes characterized by reduced academic discipline and diminished interpersonal communication. Other studies have demonstrated that cognitive-behavioral interventions effectively reduce problematic internet use, social media addiction, and technology-related behavioral disorders among adolescents (Keles et al., 2020). However, despite these findings, relatively few studies have specifically examined the effectiveness of integrating cognitive restructuring techniques within group counseling to address excessive TikTok use among Indonesian senior high school students.

This limitation represents an important research gap. Most previous studies have primarily focused on describing the negative impacts of TikTok or examining general social media addiction without investigating structured counseling interventions implemented within school settings. Furthermore, research combining cognitive restructuring techniques with group counseling specifically targeting excessive TikTok use remains limited, particularly within the context of Indonesian secondary education. Therefore, additional empirical evidence is required to determine whether such interventions effectively promote healthier digital behavior among adolescents.

The present study addresses this gap by examining the effectiveness of group counseling using Cognitive Restructuring techniques in reducing excessive TikTok use among senior high school students. Unlike previous descriptive studies, this research evaluates a structured counseling program designed to modify irrational beliefs underlying problematic social media behavior while simultaneously strengthening students' self-control and adaptive coping skills. The integration of cognitive restructuring into group counseling constitutes the primary novelty of this study, offering both theoretical and practical contributions to the fields of educational psychology and school counseling.

The findings are expected to enrich the literature concerning cognitive-behavioral interventions for problematic social media use and provide evidence-based recommendations for school counselors, teachers, and educational policymakers. By demonstrating the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring within group counseling, this study may contribute to the development of preventive and curative counseling programs that support adolescents in maintaining healthier digital lifestyles while enhancing their academic engagement and psychological well-being.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental research design, specifically the one-group pretest-posttest design, to examine the effectiveness of group counseling using Cognitive Restructuring (CR) techniques in reducing excessive TikTok use among senior high school students. This design was selected because it enables researchers to measure behavioral changes by comparing participants' conditions before and after the intervention.

The research was conducted at a senior high school in Indonesia during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants consisted of students who demonstrated high levels of excessive TikTok use, as identified through an initial screening using a validated questionnaire. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met predetermined inclusion criteria, including frequent TikTok use, difficulties controlling social media engagement, and willingness to participate in the counseling program. The selected students participated voluntarily after obtaining informed consent and approval from the school.

The primary research instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to measure the intensity of excessive TikTok use across several dimensions, including duration of use, emotional dependence, interference with academic activities, self-control, and social interaction. Instrument validity was examined through expert judgment, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

The intervention consisted of several structured group counseling sessions integrating Cognitive Restructuring techniques. Each session followed four counseling stages: orientation, transition, working, and termination. During the intervention, participants identified irrational thoughts related to TikTok use, challenged maladaptive beliefs, developed adaptive coping thoughts, practiced positive self-instruction, and reinforced healthier behavioral patterns through guided group discussions and reflective activities.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize participants' characteristics and levels of excessive TikTok use before and after the intervention. Furthermore, inferential statistical analysis employing a paired-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether significant differences existed between pretest and posttest scores. Statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics, with a significance level of 0.05. A statistically significant reduction in posttest scores indicated that group counseling using Cognitive Restructuring techniques effectively reduced excessive TikTok use among the participating students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants' Characteristics

The participants in this study were senior high school students identified as exhibiting excessive TikTok use based on the results of the preliminary assessment. These students demonstrated behavioral characteristics commonly associated with problematic social media use, including prolonged daily screen time, difficulties controlling the duration of TikTok usage, reduced concentration during classroom learning, procrastination in completing academic assignments, and decreased participation in direct social interactions. These characteristics are consistent with previous findings indicating that excessive social media engagement negatively affects adolescents' academic performance, emotional regulation, and social functioning (Boer et al., 2021).

Before the intervention, most participants reported using TikTok not only as a source of entertainment but also as a coping mechanism to escape boredom, stress, and academic pressure. Many participants admitted checking TikTok immediately after waking up, during school breaks, before studying, and before going to sleep. Such behavioral patterns indicate

that TikTok had become an integral part of their daily routine and that its use was increasingly difficult to regulate voluntarily.

The preliminary assessment further revealed that participants experienced several cognitive distortions regarding social media use. For example, many believed that they would miss important information or become socially isolated if they reduced their TikTok usage. Others perceived TikTok as the only effective method for relieving stress and improving mood after school activities. These irrational beliefs became the primary cognitive targets addressed during the counseling intervention.

Pretest Result

The pretest was administered before the implementation of group counseling to identify the baseline level of excessive TikTok use among participants. The assessment measured several behavioral indicators, including frequency of use, duration of daily use, emotional attachment to TikTok, interference with academic responsibilities, loss of self-control, and the influence of TikTok on interpersonal relationships.

The pretest findings demonstrated that most participants exhibited relatively high levels of problematic TikTok use. Students frequently reported spending several hours each day scrolling through videos without clear objectives. Many participants acknowledged postponing homework, reducing study time, and neglecting household responsibilities due to prolonged engagement with the application.

Furthermore, participants showed strong emotional dependence on TikTok. They often experienced boredom, anxiety, or discomfort when unable to access the application. Notifications, trending videos, and algorithm-generated recommendations encouraged continuous engagement, making it difficult for students to stop browsing even when they intended to do so.

These findings support previous studies suggesting that excessive social media use is strongly associated with reduced academic engagement and impaired self-regulation among adolescents (Keles et al., 2020). The pretest results therefore confirmed the necessity of implementing an intervention specifically targeting maladaptive cognitive processes underlying excessive TikTok use.

Implementation of Group Counseling Using Cognitive Restructuring

The counseling intervention was conducted through several structured group sessions following the principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, particularly Cognitive Restructuring techniques. Each counseling meeting consisted of four sequential stages: orientation, transition, working, and termination.

Orientation Stage

During the initial stage, the counselor established rapport among group members, introduced the objectives of the counseling program, explained group rules, and created a supportive environment encouraging openness and mutual respect. Participants were invited to share their experiences regarding TikTok use without fear of criticism or judgment.

Developing trust during this stage proved essential because many participants initially felt embarrassed to discuss their excessive social media habits. As the sessions progressed, students became increasingly comfortable sharing personal experiences, enabling meaningful group interaction.

Transition Stage

The transition stage focused on helping participants recognize the irrational thoughts contributing to excessive TikTok use. Through guided discussion, students identified automatic thoughts that frequently appeared before opening the application.

Common irrational beliefs expressed by participants included:

- "I will miss important trends if I stop using TikTok."
- "TikTok is the only way to relieve stress."
- "Everyone else spends hours on TikTok, so my behavior is normal."
- "Watching videos helps me avoid academic pressure."

The counselor encouraged participants to examine the accuracy of these beliefs by comparing them with real-life experiences. This reflective process enabled participants to recognize inconsistencies between their perceptions and actual outcomes.

Working Stage

The working stage represented the core component of the counseling intervention. During this phase, Cognitive Restructuring techniques were systematically implemented to replace irrational beliefs with more realistic and adaptive thinking patterns.

The counselor introduced the concept of automatic thoughts, explaining how irrational thinking influences emotions and behaviors. Participants learned to identify situations that triggered excessive TikTok use and analyzed the relationship between their thoughts, emotional responses, and subsequent behaviors.

For instance, one participant initially believed:

"If I don't watch TikTok tonight, I'll feel left behind."

After guided cognitive restructuring, the participant reformulated the thought into:

"Important information can still be obtained through many other sources, and reducing TikTok use allows me to focus on my academic goals."

Another participant originally stated:

"TikTok helps me forget all my problems."

Following cognitive evaluation, the participant replaced this belief with:

"TikTok only distracts me temporarily. Solving my academic tasks directly will reduce my stress more effectively."

This process illustrates the fundamental objective of Cognitive Restructuring: transforming maladaptive cognition into rational thinking capable of supporting healthier behavioral decisions.

Participants also practiced coping self-instruction, encouraging themselves through positive internal dialogue before opening the TikTok application. Examples included:

- "I can control my screen time."
- "Finishing my homework is more important."
- "Entertainment can wait until my responsibilities are completed."

Repeated practice strengthened students' confidence in regulating their own behavior.

Termination Stage

The final counseling stage emphasized evaluation and behavioral reinforcement. Participants reflected upon the changes they experienced throughout the counseling process and identified practical strategies for maintaining healthier digital habits after the intervention concluded. Students collectively developed personal action plans, including limiting screen time, scheduling study hours before entertainment, disabling unnecessary notifications, and engaging in alternative recreational activities such as reading, exercising, or participating in extracurricular programs. Positive reinforcement from counselors and fellow participants further strengthened participants' commitment to sustaining behavioral changes beyond the counseling sessions.

Changes in Students' Cognitive Patterns

One of the most significant findings of this study was the observable improvement in participants' cognitive patterns following the intervention. Before counseling, most students perceived TikTok as an essential daily necessity that could not easily be reduced. Their

thinking was dominated by irrational assumptions emphasizing immediate gratification over long-term academic goals.

Following Cognitive Restructuring, participants demonstrated noticeable improvements in cognitive flexibility. Students increasingly recognized that excessive TikTok use was primarily maintained by distorted thinking rather than actual necessity. They became more capable of evaluating the consequences of their digital behavior objectively and making conscious decisions regarding their social media use.

This cognitive transformation represents the central mechanism underlying behavioral change within Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. According to Beck (2021), sustainable behavioral improvement occurs when irrational beliefs are replaced by realistic cognitive interpretations that promote adaptive emotional responses and healthier behavioral choices.

Moreover, group interaction substantially enhanced the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring. Observing peers successfully challenge irrational beliefs encouraged participants to reconsider their own assumptions. Mutual feedback and shared experiences created a collaborative learning environment in which adaptive thinking became socially reinforced.

Consequently, participants gradually developed stronger self-awareness, improved self-control, and greater confidence in managing their digital behavior independently. These cognitive improvements formed the psychological foundation for the behavioral changes observed during the post-intervention assessment.

CONCLUSIONS

The present study investigated the effectiveness of group counseling using Cognitive Restructuring (CR) techniques in reducing excessive TikTok use among senior high school students. The findings demonstrate that the intervention successfully improved students' ability to regulate their social media behavior by modifying the maladaptive cognitive patterns underlying excessive TikTok engagement. Prior to the intervention, participants exhibited irrational beliefs, poor self-control, emotional dependence on TikTok, and behavioral patterns that negatively affected their academic performance and social interactions. Following the counseling sessions, participants showed significant improvements in cognitive awareness, self-regulation, and responsible digital behavior.

The statistical analysis further confirmed that the difference between pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant, indicating that the reduction in excessive TikTok use was attributable to the counseling intervention rather than random variation. Through Cognitive Restructuring, participants learned to identify irrational thoughts, challenge cognitive distortions, develop adaptive coping strategies, and reinforce healthier patterns of thinking and behavior. The collaborative nature of group counseling also enhanced participants' motivation by providing opportunities for peer support, shared learning experiences, and mutual encouragement throughout the intervention process.

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends the application of Cognitive Behavioral Theory within the context of problematic social media use among adolescents. It demonstrates that excessive TikTok use is influenced not only by technological accessibility but also by maladaptive cognitive processes that can be modified through structured counseling interventions. The findings therefore contribute to the growing body of literature concerning school counseling, adolescent mental health, and digital well-being.

Practically, the study offers valuable implications for guidance and counseling professionals, teachers, school administrators, and policymakers. Schools are encouraged to integrate Cognitive Restructuring-based group counseling into comprehensive guidance programs aimed at promoting healthy digital habits and preventing problematic social media use. Future studies are recommended to employ larger samples, experimental research designs, and longitudinal approaches to examine the long-term effectiveness of counseling interventions and to explore their applicability across diverse educational settings.

REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.). American Psychiatric Association.
- Andreassen, C. S. (2021). Online social network site addiction: A comprehensive review. *Current Addiction Reports*, 8(2), 263–271.
- Beck, J. S. (2021). *Cognitive behavior therapy: Basics and beyond* (3rd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Boer, M., Stevens, G. W. J. M., Finkenauer, C., & de Looze, M. E. (2021). Social media use intensity, social media use problems, and mental health among adolescents. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 116, 106645.
- Corey, G. (2021). *Theory and practice of group counseling* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- DataReportal. (2025). *Digital 2025: Global overview report*. <https://datareportal.com>
- Ellis, A. (1994). *Reason and emotion in psychotherapy* (Rev. ed.). Citadel Press.
- Fauzan, A. (2021). *Dampak aplikasi TikTok pada interaksi sosial remaja: Studi di Kecamatan Gambut Kabupaten Banjar* (Doctoral dissertation). Universitas Islam Kalimantan Muhammad Arsyad Al-Banjari.
- Keles, B., McCrae, N., & Grealish, A. (2020). A systematic review: The influence of social media on depression, anxiety, and psychological distress in adolescents. *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*, 25(1), 79–93.
- Malimbe, A., Waani, F., & Suwu, E. A. (2021). Dampak penggunaan aplikasi online TikTok (Douyin) terhadap minat belajar di kalangan mahasiswa Sosiologi Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Politik Universitas Sam Ratulangi Manado. *Jurnal Ilmiah Society*, 1(1), 1–10.
- Mulyana, D. (2000). *Ilmu komunikasi: Suatu pengantar*. PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Nurmala, M. D., Afrizal, S. V., & Wibowo, T. U. (2022). Dampak penggunaan aplikasi TikTok terhadap perubahan perilaku sosial mahasiswa. *Hermeneutika*, 8(1), 88–98.
- Prayitno. (2017). *Konseling profesional yang berhasil: Layanan dan kegiatan pendukung*. PT RajaGrafindo Persada.
- Santrock, J. W. (2020). *Adolescence* (17th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.
- Sugiyono. (2023). *Metode penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif, dan R&D* (3rd ed.). Alfabeta.
- Yalom, I. D., & Leszcz, M. (2020). *The theory and practice of group psychotherapy* (6th ed.). Basic Books.
- Young, K. S. (1998). *Caught in the net: How to recognize the signs of internet addiction and a winning strategy for recovery*. John Wiley & Sons.

Copyright holder:

©Desmi, D., Herlinda, F.

First publication right:

Journal of Multidisciplinary Research of Education

This article is licensed under:

CC-BY