



Increasing Adolescents' Interest in Learning through Group Counseling with Motivational Interviewing Techniques

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	ABSTRACT
<p>ARTICLE INFO: Received April 05, 2026</p> <p>Revised April 20, 2026</p> <p>Accepted May 01, 2026</p> <p>KEYWORDS: Learning Interest, Group Counseling, Motivational Interviewing Techniques, Adolescents'</p>	<p>This study aims to determine the level of interest in learning among adolescents in Islamic boarding schools and to analyze the effectiveness of motivational interviewing techniques in increasing learning interest in these schools. The decrease in interest in learning experienced by MT adolescents is generally in the form of negative thoughts that appear repeatedly, are difficult to control, and trigger anxiety and concentration disorders. This condition is related to the background of trauma, social pressure, and previously unaddressed emotional instability. The study uses a quantitative, quasi-experimental, one-group pretest-posttest design. The instrument used was a Likert-scale questionnaire that measured interest in learning before and after the intervention. The data were analyzed by comparing pretest and posttest scores. The results showed a significant decrease in learning interest scores following a motivational interviewing intervention. This technique helps teens identify cognitive distortions, challenge irrational thoughts, and build more realistic and adaptive mindsets. Interventions also improve emotional regulation and self-control in the face of negative thoughts. This study concludes that motivational interviewing is an effective intervention strategy for reducing the decline in learning interest among MT adolescents.</p>

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), a santri (Islamic student) is a person who studies Islam, especially one who lives in an Islamic boarding school (pesantren). This term has long been used in Indonesian society and has a broader meaning than simply referring to religious students. Santri not only study Islamic sciences such as fiqh, tafsir, hadith, and morals, but also live within the pesantren culture that prioritizes discipline, simplicity, and devotion to knowledge (Khaerani, 2024). The existence of santri has strong historical roots in Indonesia. Overall, santri are a crucial element in the social, cultural, and spiritual structure of the Indonesian nation. They are not only religious students but also guardians of values, future leaders, and symbols of moral fortitude. The role of santri needs to be continuously supported and developed so they can make a greater contribution to the nation's progress, without losing their identity as true learners who are humble and committed to Islamic values. Santri are an integral part of educational development. However, over time, new santri studying in pesantren experience. Anxiety is an emotional feeling that arises from feelings of discomfort, fear, or threateningness (Madaniyah et al., 2024). New students at the Al Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School (MTS) struggle to adapt to the school's traditions, regulations, and culture. This can lead to feelings of anxiety and a desire to transfer to a regular school.

The anxiety experienced by new students is generally reactive and situational, meaning it arises in response to new or stressful situations. Symptoms of this anxiety can include difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, excessive fear, crying easily, and difficulty concentrating on learning

(Maspupah et al., 2024). Various studies have shown that social support, spiritual approaches, and intensive mental development can reduce anxiety levels in new students. These factors contribute to a decline in new students' interest in learning.

The MT period is the time when students enter adolescence. Adolescence is a period when children's minds are still developing, as thinking shifts from childhood to adolescence (Atiqah et al., 2024). Adolescence, especially at the Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs) level, is a crucial phase in students' psychological development. During this stage, many students face challenges with adaptation, both academically, socially, and spiritually.

According to Alfuruq and Sari (2023), education is a key pillar in building character and shaping the future of the younger generation, with an interest in learning as a crucial indicator of success. A strong interest in learning encourages individuals to be actively involved, explorative, and persistent in their efforts to acquire knowledge and skills. However, in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), which uniquely integrate religious and general education, maintaining and enhancing students' interest in learning is a complex challenge that requires serious attention. Students are faced with a highly dense curriculum, combining religious lessons such as tafsir (interpretation of the Quran), hadith (hadith), and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) with general subjects like mathematics, science, and language. Furthermore, they live within a strict disciplinary system, a busy daily routine, and the pressure to master various fields of knowledge in a relatively short time. These conditions, while noble in their intentions, can sometimes undermine their intrinsic motivation to learn.

Group counseling services are a relevant psychological intervention to address learning interest issues. This approach allows students to collectively share experiences, challenges, and learning strategies in a supportive and understanding environment (Hijr et al., 2025).

One group counseling technique with great potential to increase students' interest in learning is Motivational Interviewing (MI). Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a collaborative, client-centered counseling approach that aims to strengthen individuals' intrinsic motivation to make positive behavioral changes (Dewi, 2019).

Motivational interviewing and group counseling can be effectively integrated to increase students' motivation to learn (Baroroh & Imania, 2024). Motivational interviewing, which focuses on exploring intrinsic motivation and addressing ambivalence toward behavioral change, can be applied in supportive group counseling sessions. Group counseling itself provides a platform for students to learn and solve social problems while receiving support from their peers. By incorporating motivational interviewing techniques such as open-ended questions, reflection, and reinforcement within a group setting, facilitators can help students deeply explore their motivations, share experiences, and receive constructive feedback.

According to Anisah (2020), the application of Motivational Interviewing in group counseling services at Islamic boarding schools can help students identify personal values related to education and explore discrepancies between their current learning interests and future goals. Counselors will facilitate discussions focused on students' reasons for wanting to study harder. This approach is expected to foster a sense of ownership of the change process and increase the effectiveness of interventions. Therefore, the application of group counseling using Motivational Interviewing techniques has the same goal of helping students solve their problems with group members who share similar concerns, thereby motivating each other.

Based on the problem description above, researchers believe that group counseling services integrated with Motivational Interviewing techniques have great potential to significantly increase students' interest in learning at Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, researchers are interested in conducting a study entitled "The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Services with Motivational Interviewing Techniques to Increase Learning Interest in Islamic Boarding Schools." The problem formulation and objectives of this study are as follows:

Problem formulation: [1] How is the learning interest of students in Islamic boarding schools before being provided with group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique?; [2] How is the learning interest of students in Islamic boarding schools after being provided with group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique? And; [3] How effective is the group counseling service using the Motivational Interviewing technique in increasing students' learning interest in Islamic boarding schools?

Research Objectives: [1] To determine the learning interest of students in Islamic boarding schools before being provided with group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique; [2] To determine the learning interest of students in Islamic boarding schools after being provided with group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique, and; [3] To determine the effectiveness of group counseling services using the Motivational Interviewing technique in increasing students' learning interest in Islamic boarding schools.

METHODS

The research approach used in this study is quantitative, with a causal experimental design. According to Sugiyono (2019), the causal experiment method is used to measure the effect of a particular treatment on another variable under controlled conditions. The research design is a One-Group Pretest-Posttest Design, which involves two measurements: a pretest conducted before the treatment and a posttest conducted after the treatment. The instrument used is a Likert-scale questionnaire that measures learning interest before and after the intervention. Data were analyzed by comparing pretest and posttest scores.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Results

Description of Learning Interest Before Group Counseling Using Motivational Interviewing

Before conducting group counseling services using the group activity method with students, the researcher administered a pre-test to the students. This aimed to determine the level of learning interest among the 21 students studied. To obtain more detailed information about students' learning interest at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School, the researcher outlined the pre-test results on a psychological scale, categorized as high, medium, and low.

The following are the results of the pre-test on students' learning interest before receiving group counseling services. The researcher used computerized calculations using IBM SPSS 23.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics Pre Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre test	21	37	76	51.62	9.271

Based on the pre-test results, students' learning interest at Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School before receiving services was still relatively low. This is indicated by an average score of 51.62, a minimum score of 37, a maximum score of 76, and a distribution of categories dominated by low scores.

The low initial interest in learning indicates that the previous learning process did not fully foster students' interest and active involvement in learning activities. However, interest in learning is a crucial factor that can influence student engagement, discipline, and success in the learning process. According to Khairunnisa et al. (2024), students with a high interest in learning tend to be more active, focused, and strongly motivated to understand the learning material.

According to Prakoso and Lisma (2022), group counseling services are an effective strategy for increasing students' interest in learning because, through group dynamics, students can share experiences, receive social support, and increase their self-awareness of the importance of learning. Furthermore, several studies have shown that group counseling services can be an effective strategy for increasing students' interest in learning, as group dynamics allow students to share experiences, receive social support, and increase their self-awareness of the importance of learning (95.2% of respondents).

When linked to the theory of learning interest, these results indicate that many students may not have experienced enjoyable, relevant, and motivating learning. Learning interest can increase when students feel emotionally involved, need the material being studied, and receive recognition and support during the learning process (Alfaruqy & Sari, 2023). Therefore, guidance services, active learning strategies, the use of relevant media, and motivational approaches are essential to increase students' interest in learning gradually.

Based on the overall analysis, students' initial interest in learning before the services were provided was low. Therefore, group counseling services are needed to increase students' motivation, enthusiasm, and active participation in the learning process.

Description of Learning Interest After Group Counseling Using the Motivational Interviewing Method

After group counseling services using the motivational interviewing method were provided, a post-test was administered to assess students' learning interest following the session. The post-test results are presented in a table using computerized calculations in IBM SPSS 23 as follows:

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics Post Test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Post test	21	96	112	103.81	4.008
Valid N (listwise)	21				

The post-test results showed that the services provided to students at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School had a very significant influence on increasing interest in learning. If in the pre-test the majority of students were in the low category (95.2%), then after the service was provided, all students (100%) were in the high category. This shows that the researcher's intervention, using the group counseling service method with the Motivational Interviewing approach, was effective in significantly increasing students' interest in learning, as evidenced by both the average score and the distribution of categories.

According to Apriyanti et al. (2025), the Motivational Interviewing approach is a counseling technique that focuses on developing individual intrinsic motivation through a process of exploration and reflection on personal goals. This measurable change indicates that the approach, strategy, or program implemented has succeeded in motivating students, fostering interest, and cultivating a positive attitude towards the learning process (Maghribi & Mujahadah, 2025).

Discussion

Based on the description above, the smaller the significance value, the lower the significance level. Therefore, the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected. This means that group counseling services using motivational interviewing have proven effective in increasing learning interest at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School. The significantly higher post-test scores reinforce this compared to the pre-test. The data pattern confirms that the intervention provided has a very significant and consistent impact on improving respondents' abilities.

Group counseling using the motivational interviewing method was conducted at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School in three sessions, each consisting of five stages: formation, transition, core activities, conclusion, and termination. In the first session, the counselor opened the session with introductions, explained the group's goals and rules, and administered a pre-test questionnaire to determine the students' level of learning interest before the service was provided. The second session focused on applying motivational interviewing techniques through a set of questions about the importance of learning and on any learning obstacles students experienced. The session also included art therapy, which involved drawing emotional expressions related to learning experiences and reflecting on their meaning with the group. In the third session, participants shared their learning interests and developments, and developed an action plan containing learning targets, study schedules, strategies to be used, and required support. The session concluded with a post-test to assess changes in learning interest following participation in the group counseling service.

The results showed that group counseling using the motivational interviewing method was effective in increasing students' learning interest. Based on data analysis, the average pre-test score was 51.62 with a standard deviation of 9.271 and a score range of 37–76, while the average post-test score increased to 103.81 with a standard deviation of 4.008 and a score range of 96–112. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test showed that all respondents (21 people) increased their scores without decreasing them, with a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05). The comparison graph of the pre-test and post-test also showed a consistent increase in all respondents. Thus, it can be concluded that group counseling services using the motivational interviewing method have proven effective in increasing students' interest in learning at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School.

CONCLUSION

First, the level of student interest in learning at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School before receiving group counseling was low, with 95.2% and an average total score of 51.62. Second, the level of student interest in learning at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School after receiving group counseling was high, with 100% and an average total score of 103.81.

Third, the Wilcoxon test results showed a z-value of -4.016 and a p-value of 0.000 (<0.05). Based on this, there was a significant difference in learning interest between before and after counseling services. Learning interest increased after counseling. Therefore, counseling using the motivational interviewing method is effective in increasing student interest in learning at the Al-Ittifaqiah Islamic Boarding School.

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