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The Effect of Classroom Guidance Services on Negative Conformity Behavior among Eighth-Grade Students at SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan

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ABSTRACT

Negative conformity, the tendency to adjust one's attitudes and behavior to group pressure in ways that harm oneself or others, is a common concern among early adolescents. At SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan, Indonesia, an interview with the school counselor identified bullying, truancy, smoking, and fighting that generally arose from pressure to follow influential peers. This study examined the effect of classroom guidance services on the negative conformity behavior of eighth-grade students. A pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design was used. From a population of 88 students in classes VIII-2 to VIII-4, one intact class (VIII-4, n = 28) was selected by lottery and received a series of classroom guidance sessions addressing three aspects of negative conformity: cohesiveness, agreement, and obedience. Data were collected with a Likert-type Negative Conformity Scale before and after the intervention. Because the pretest scores departed from normality (Shapiro–Wilk p = .040), the hypothesis was tested with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The mean score fell from 92.29 (SD = 7.12) to 69.18 (SD = 5.31), a reduction of 23.11 points. Before the intervention, most students were in the moderate category (54%) and 21% were in the high or very high categories; after the intervention, all 28 students were in the very low category. Every student's score decreased (Z = −4.631, p < .001, r = .88). Classroom guidance delivered without supplementary media was therefore associated with a substantial reduction in negative conformity. Because the design lacked a control group, the findings should be confirmed with controlled designs and longer follow-up.

INTRODUCTION

Early adolescence, which in Indonesia largely coincides with the junior high school (Sekolah Menengah Pertama, SMP) years, is a period in which the need to be accepted by peers becomes especially strong. Young adolescents are constructing a sense of who they are while paying increasing attention to how others evaluate them, and thinking about the self and thinking about others develop in close interaction during these years (Crone & Fuligni, 2020). The maturation of the social brain makes adolescents particularly responsive to the views and behavior of their peers, a sensitivity that can encourage prosocial conduct but can also draw them toward risky choices (Andrews, Ahmed, et al., 2021; Andrews, Foulkes, et al., 2020). Laursen and Veenstra (2021) describe early adolescence as a period of heightened conformity in which peer influence serves to increase similarity among friends and group members, smoothing integration into the group and reducing the risk of social exclusion. When the norms of the group are unhealthy, however, the same drive for similarity can lead

students to set aside their own judgment. In this article, the term negative conformity refers to the tendency of an individual to adjust attitudes, beliefs, and behavior to those of a group, not out of personal conviction but because of pressure or the wish to be accepted, even when the adjustment is harmful to the individual or to others.

Social psychology distinguishes two broad motives for conformity. Normative social influence refers to the drive to change one's behavior so that it matches the expectations of a group, in order to gain approval or to avoid rejection. Informational social influence refers to the tendency to treat other people as a source of information about what is correct, particularly when a situation is ambiguous or uncertain. The strength of these pressures was demonstrated in Asch's classic line-judgment experiments, and a recent replication found that about one third of participants still gave conforming but incorrect answers; monetary incentives reduced the error rate without eliminating social influence, and comparable levels of conformity were observed for political opinions (Franzen & Mader, 2023). For adolescents, the informational route is especially relevant because peers often serve as a reference point for decisions under uncertainty (Ciranka & van den Bos, 2019), and a neuroimaging meta-analysis has shown that adolescent decision-making in social contexts engages brain regions involved in processing social information in addition to regions associated with affect and cognitive control (van Hoorn et al., 2019). The normative route, in turn, is rooted in the fundamental human need to belong, which shapes how people think, feel, and act in their social groups (Allen et al., 2021). Together, these motives explain why a student may follow a group's harmful behavior either simply to remain accepted or because the group appears to know better than the student does.

Negative conformity matters for schools because its consequences extend beyond individual students to the broader learning climate and to character formation, which Indonesian education treats as a national priority (Hidayati et al., 2020). A meta-analysis of longitudinal studies found that the behavior of peers predicted later changes in children's and adolescents' own externalizing, internalizing, and academic behavior; the effect was small but robust and did not differ by outcome, age, or type of peer relationship (Giletta et al., 2021). Although a reanalysis has cautioned that such observational estimates may be inflated by measurement error and regression to the mean (Sorjonen et al., 2023), specific risk behaviors show a consistent link with peer pressure. In a meta-analysis of studies with high school and university students, those who reported pressure from friends had substantially higher odds of smoking (Leshargie et al., 2019). Bullying is likewise a group phenomenon: in early adolescence, aggressors tend to gain popularity and peer-group norms become increasingly approving of bullying, which makes the behavior difficult to change through individual sanctions alone (Salmivalli et al., 2021). School absenteeism and dropout are also shaped by multiple interacting risk factors, so preventive efforts are more promising when they address students' social context rather than single behaviors (Gubbels et al., 2019).

Similar patterns were reported at SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan, North Kalimantan. In an interview with the school counselor on 26 January 2026, the researcher learned of several forms of deviant behavior at the school, including bullying, truancy, smoking, and fights between students. According to the counselor, these behaviors rarely arose spontaneously from individual students; they usually began with social pressure to follow one or more peers regarded as dominant or influential within a group. Students who bullied others were often pushed by the group to treat the act as a form of solidarity, while truancy and smoking were frequently carried out together as symbols of group cohesion and identity, even though many

of the students privately recognized that these actions were wrong. This description is consistent with the view that negative conformity is driven by normative and informational influence and by adolescents' need for social acceptance.

If negative conformity is rooted in group processes, an appropriate response is not limited to reprimands or sanctions for individual students but also includes services that reach all students in a class collectively. Classroom guidance is a basic service of school guidance and counseling that is preventive and developmental in nature. It allows the school counselor to work with an entire class through scheduled, structured sessions that combine information, discussion, and practice, so that students can recognize group pressure that they previously regarded as normal and rehearse more independent responses. Evidence from universal school-based programs supports this direction. A meta-analysis of universal social and emotional learning interventions found improvements in students' skills, attitudes, behavior, peer relationships, and school functioning compared with control conditions, although the size of the benefit varied with program content and implementation quality (Cipriano et al., 2023). A review of meta-analyses reached a similar conclusion and called for closer attention to how and for whom such programs work (Durlak et al., 2022). Classroom curricula delivered by school counselors have produced gains in social resilience, emotion regulation, and social-emotional competence (Chance et al., 2023; Martinez et al., 2022), and school-based interventions have been shown to reduce adolescents' psychological stress and to improve well-being (Tejada-Gallardo et al., 2020; van Loon et al., 2020).

At the same time, the evidence indicates that changing peer-related behavior is not straightforward. School-based anti-bullying programs reduce bullying perpetration and victimization, but the effects are modest and vary considerably across studies (Gaffney et al., 2021). Peer-led interventions are promising for reducing risk behavior, yet their effects have also proved modest, and the mechanisms through which they work remain poorly understood (Veenstra & Laninga-Wijnen, 2022). In Indonesia, studies of classroom guidance in relation to conformity have mostly aimed at strengthening positive conformity or at addressing peer conformity in general, and the service has typically been combined with games, media, or other supporting techniques. As a result, it remains unclear to what extent classroom guidance on its own can reduce negative conformity, and, to the authors' knowledge, no study of this kind had been conducted in Tarakan.

The present study addressed this gap by testing the effect of classroom guidance delivered directly, without supplementary media or companion techniques, on the negative conformity behavior of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan. Through the service, students were helped to understand the harmful consequences of negative conformity and encouraged to think critically, consider different points of view, and resist group pressure, with the expectation that these changes would carry over into their everyday conduct at school. The study therefore aimed to determine the effect of classroom guidance services on the negative conformity behavior of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan.

METHOD

Research Design

This study used a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. A pretest was administered to the participating class before the intervention,

the class then received classroom guidance services, and a posttest was administered after the series of sessions had been completed (Figure 1). The design was chosen because only one group of participants was available and no comparison group could be formed within the school schedule. Pretest–posttest designs allow a straightforward assessment of change in a group that receives an intervention, but they cannot by themselves rule out alternative explanations for that change, such as maturation, testing effects, or regression toward the mean (Stratton, 2019). These constraints are taken into account in the interpretation of the results.

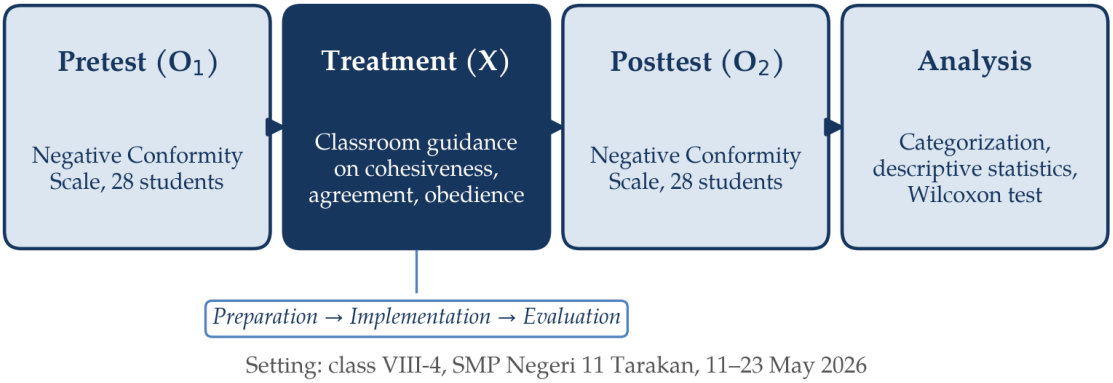


Figure 1. Research Design and Procedure of the Study

Population and Sample

The population consisted of all students in classes VIII-2, VIII-3, and VIII-4 of SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan in the 2025/2026 academic year, totaling 88 students. The sample was selected by a simple random lottery at the class level: the name of each class was written on a small slip of paper, and one slip was drawn to determine the participating class. Class VIII-4, comprising 28 students, was drawn and served as both the research sample and the group that received the intervention. Because an intact class was selected, the unit of random selection was the class rather than the individual student.

Instrument

Data were collected with a Negative Conformity Scale in Likert format developed for this study. The scale was organized around three aspects commonly used in social-psychological descriptions of conformity, namely cohesiveness, agreement, and obedience. Cohesiveness refers to the attraction to and emotional attachment that a student feels toward a group, which makes the student willing to follow the group in order to remain part of it. Agreement refers to the tendency to go along with the opinions or decisions of the group, even when the student privately disagrees. Obedience refers to the tendency to comply with the demands of group members who are regarded as dominant or influential. The instrument was tested for validity and reliability before it was used to collect the pretest and posttest data.

To describe students' levels of negative conformity, total scores were classified into five categories (Table 1). The cut-off points correspond to the pretest mean (M = 92.29) plus or minus 0.5 and 1.5 pretest standard deviations (SD = 7.123), so the categories describe each student's position relative to the distribution of the class before the intervention. The same

cut-off points were applied to the posttest scores so that pretest and posttest categories could be compared directly.

Table 1. Categorization Criteria for Negative Conformity Scores

No.	Score Interval	Category	Basis
1	X ≥ 103	Very high	Above M + 1.5 SD
2	96 ≤ X < 103	High	M + 0.5 SD to M + 1.5 SD
3	89 ≤ X < 96	Moderate	M ± 0.5 SD
4	82 ≤ X < 89	Low	M − 1.5 SD to M − 0.5 SD
5	X < 82	Very low	Below M − 1.5 SD

Source: Research instrument criteria (2026); M and SD refer to the pretest distribution

Intervention Procedure

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan from 11 to 23 May 2026. The intervention consisted of a series of classroom guidance sessions delivered by the first author to class VIII-4. Each session followed three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. The material was arranged progressively according to the three aspects of negative conformity, so that each session focused on one aspect, namely cohesiveness, agreement, or obedience. Sessions combined brief presentations with question-and-answer exchanges, class discussions of examples drawn from students' daily lives, and guided practice. Each session was supported by a contextual student worksheet (Lembar Kerja Peserta Didik) that asked students to identify forms of group pressure in familiar situations and to plan how they would respond. One practiced strategy was the sentence pattern "I agree, but…", which allowed students to express a different opinion without confronting the group openly. At the end of each session, the researcher gave feedback and reinforcement and asked students to reflect on what they had learned. No games, special media, or companion techniques were added, because the purpose of the study was to examine the effect of classroom guidance itself.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed descriptively and inferentially with SPSS version 21.0 for Windows. Descriptive analysis summarized the distribution of students across the five categories and the minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation of the pretest and posttest scores. Before hypothesis testing, normality was examined with the Shapiro–Wilk test, which is recommended for samples smaller than 50 (Mishra et al., 2019), and homogeneity of variance was examined with Levene's test. Because the pretest scores were not normally distributed, the hypothesis was tested with the nonparametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which compares paired scores without assuming normality. The significance level was set at .05. The null hypothesis (H_0) stated that classroom guidance had no effect on students' negative conformity, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) stated that it had an effect. To complement the significance test, an effect size was computed as $r = |Z|/\sqrt{N}$, with N as the number of paired observations; effect sizes were interpreted in light of the research context rather than by fixed benchmarks alone (Funder & Ozer, 2019).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study examined whether classroom guidance services would reduce the negative conformity behavior of 28 students in class VIII-4 of SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan. Students completed the Negative Conformity Scale before and after a series of sessions organized around cohesiveness, agreement, and obedience. Overall, the results showed a consistent and statistically significant decrease in negative conformity after the intervention, supported by both descriptive and inferential analyses. The findings are presented and discussed together below.

Shift in Negative Conformity Categories

Figure 2 shows how students were distributed across the five categories before and after the intervention. At the pretest, most students were in the moderate category (15 students, 54%), followed by the low category (6 students, 21%), the high category (4 students, 14%), and the very high category (2 students, 7%); only one student (4%) was in the very low category. At the posttest, all 28 students (100%) were in the very low category, and no student remained in the moderate, high, or very high categories.

The pretest profile confirms the problem described by the school counselor. More than one in five students showed high or very high negative conformity, and most of the remainder showed a moderate tendency to follow the group, which is consistent with the view that susceptibility to peer influence rises in early adolescence (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021) and that peer influence operates across a wide range of behaviors (Giletta et al., 2021). The complete shift to the very low category after the intervention indicates that the change was not limited to students who started with low scores. Students who initially had high or very high scores also moved to the lowest category. Because the cut-off points were derived from the pretest distribution, however, this shift should be read as a movement well below the class's own starting level rather than as evidence that negative conformity had disappeared.

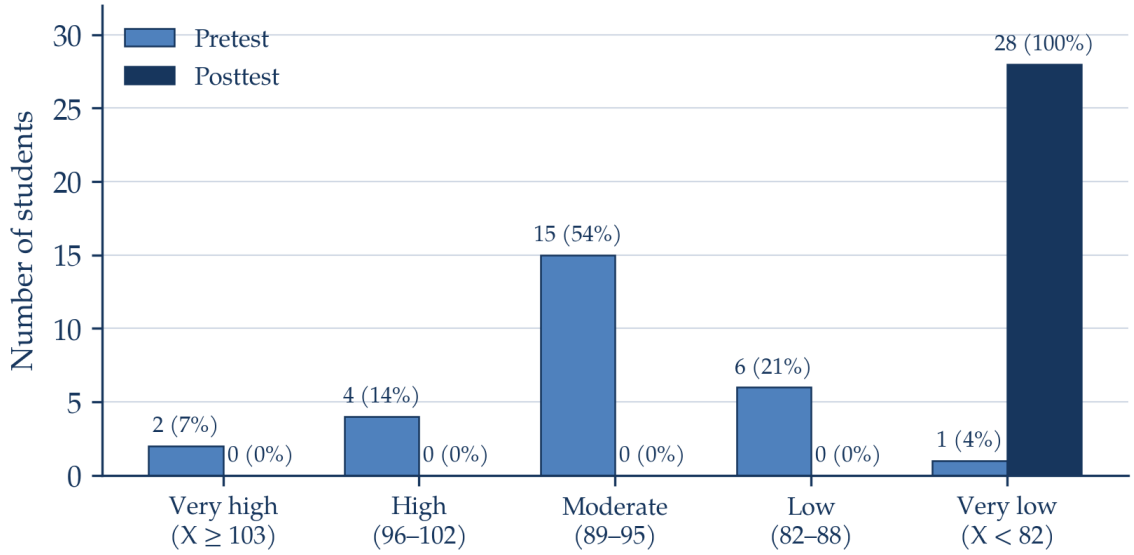


Figure 2. Distribution of Students across Negative Conformity Categories before and after Classroom Guidance

Change in Scores and Hypothesis Testing

The descriptive statistics in Figure 3 show that the mean negative conformity score decreased from 92.29 (*SD* = 7.123; range 70–109) at the pretest to 69.18 (*SD* = 5.306; range 53–79) at the posttest. The mean decrease of 23.11 points corresponds to a reduction of about 25% relative to the pretest mean. The maximum posttest score (79) was lower than the pretest mean, and the smaller standard deviation at the posttest indicates that students' scores became more similar to one another after the intervention.

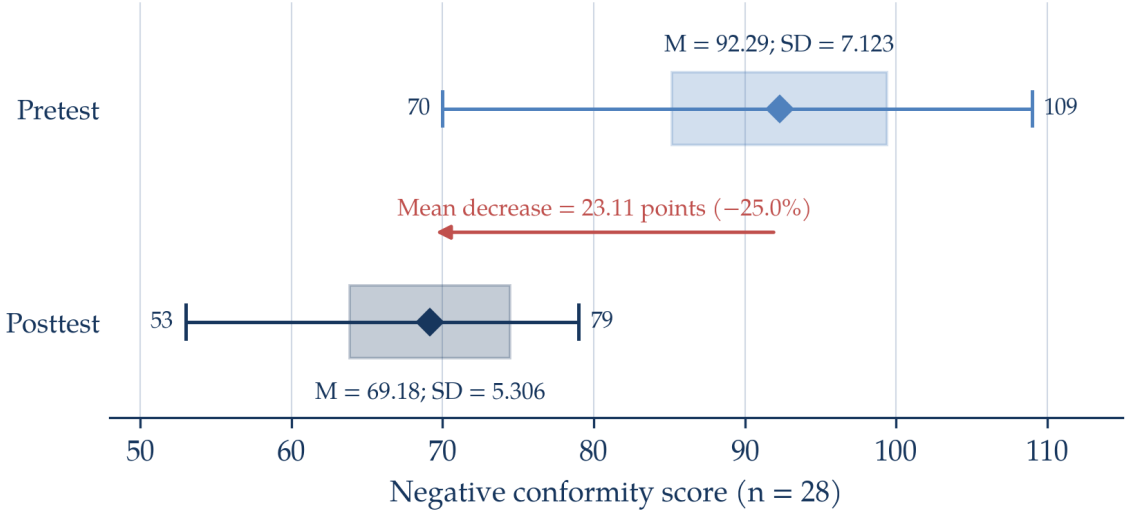


Figure 3. Pretest and Posttest Negative Conformity Scores (Mean, ±1 SD, and Range)

The results of the prerequisite and hypothesis tests are summarized in Table 2. The Shapiro–Wilk test showed that the posttest scores were normally distributed (p = .150) but that the pretest scores were not (p = .040). Levene's test indicated homogeneous variances (p = .343). Because one of the paired distributions violated the normality assumption, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used. The test produced Z = −4.631 with p < .001, so H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted. All 28 students obtained a lower score at the posttest than at the pretest; no student's score stayed the same or increased.

Table 2. Results of the Prerequisite and Hypothesis Tests

Test	Statistic	df / n	p	Decision
Shapiro–Wilk, pretest	W = 0.923	28	.040	Not normal
Shapiro–Wilk, posttest	W = 0.945	28	.150	Normal
Levene's test	F = 0.917	1, 54	.343	Homogeneous
Wilcoxon signed-rank test	Z = −4.631	28	< .001	H_0 rejected
Effect size	r = .88	28	–	Large

Source: Data processing results (2026). Kolmogorov–Smirnov (Lilliefors) results: pretest D = *0.137,* p = *.189; posttest* D = *0.129,* p = *.200. Wilcoxon ranks: 28 negative, 0 positive, 0 ties*

The effect size of r = .88 is large by conventional standards and well above the modest average effects reported for universal school-based programs (Cipriano et al., 2023; Gaffney et al., 2021). This contrast calls for caution rather than celebration. Effect sizes from a single uncontrolled group are not directly comparable with those from controlled trials, and their meaning depends on the outcome measure and the context in which they were obtained

(Funder & Ozer, 2019). In a one-group design, part of the change can reflect testing effects, students' increased awareness of what the scale was measuring, or a tendency for extreme scores to move toward the mean when measured again (Sorjonen et al., 2023; Stratton, 2019). The consistency of the change across all students is nonetheless noteworthy, because even the students who began in the very high category showed a marked decrease.

Changes across the Three Aspects of Negative Conformity

Indicator-level analysis showed that all three aspects decreased after the intervention, but not to the same extent. The decrease was most pronounced for agreement and obedience, for which all students moved into the very low category, whereas cohesiveness also decreased but some students remained in the low category. This pattern suggests that students' attraction to and emotional attachment to their group are harder to change than their tendency to agree with the group's opinions or to comply with dominant members. Cohesiveness is closely related to the sense of belonging and solidarity that individuals develop toward their group, and belonging is a basic need that shapes thinking, emotion, and behavior (Allen et al., 2021). From the perspective of the influence-compatibility model, conformity in early adolescence serves to preserve membership and compatibility within the group (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021). Students may therefore learn to disagree with or refuse specific requests from their peers relatively quickly while still valuing the group and wishing to remain part of it. This interpretation is consistent with the aim of the intervention, which was not to separate students from their friends but to help them resist harmful pressure without losing those relationships.

How Classroom Guidance May Reduce Negative Conformity

The decrease in negative conformity supports the view that classroom guidance, as a basic preventive and developmental service, can serve as an early safeguard against students being drawn into harmful behavior by group pressure. Several features of the intervention may explain this effect. First, the sessions made group pressure visible. By discussing everyday examples of bullying, skipping class, and smoking together, students could recognize that pressures they had regarded as ordinary parts of friendship were in fact forms of conformity. Because adolescents rely heavily on social information when making decisions (Ciranka & van den Bos, 2019; van Hoorn et al., 2019), discussing these situations openly in class may have changed the information that students used to judge what their peers expected and what was acceptable. Second, the sessions addressed the normative motive directly. Replication evidence shows that conformity persists even when individuals have reasons to answer correctly (Franzen & Mader, 2023), which implies that knowing what is right is not sufficient; students also need ways of acting on that knowledge without risking rejection. The "I agree, but…" pattern gave students a socially acceptable way to express disagreement, a strategy that is consistent with the emphasis of the influence-compatibility model on maintaining group harmony (Laursen & Veenstra, 2021).

Third, the intervention involved the whole class at the same time. Peer norms are shared properties of groups, and anti-bullying research shows that classroom norms and peer status shape whether students support aggressors or defend victims (Lambe et al., 2019; Salmivalli et al., 2021). When an entire class discusses the same situations and rehearses the same responses, the perceived norm of the group may shift along with individual attitudes, so that

resisting pressure becomes more acceptable to the group as a whole. This mechanism may help explain why the change in this study was uniform across students rather than limited to a few individuals. It also fits evidence that the effects of social and emotional learning programs extend to peer relationships and social behavior (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2022) and that counselor-led classroom curricula can strengthen students' social-emotional competence (Chance et al., 2023; Martinez et al., 2022).

Fourth, the structure of the service likely contributed to the result. The sessions followed planned stages of preparation, implementation, and evaluation; the material was sequenced according to the three aspects of negative conformity; each session included a contextual worksheet; and each ended with feedback and reinforcement. Reviews of universal school-based programs have repeatedly shown that outcomes depend on the quality and consistency of implementation and not only on program content (Cipriano et al., 2023; Durlak et al., 2022). In this sense, the success of classroom guidance appears to depend less on the novelty of the media used than on how well the service is planned, delivered, and evaluated. The findings are also relevant to the specific behaviors reported at the school. Peer pressure is strongly associated with adolescent smoking (Leshargie et al., 2019), and bullying is maintained by group dynamics (Salmivalli et al., 2021), so reducing students' readiness to follow the group may be a useful preventive step against several of these behaviors at once, although the present study did not measure the behaviors directly.

Implementation Challenges

Two practical obstacles arose during the study. The first concerned scheduling. The researcher was also completing a school field-experience program (Pengenalan Lapangan Persekolahan, PLP) at the same school, and it was initially difficult to align the timing of the sessions with that program. This was resolved through close communication with the supervising teacher and the academic supervisor, which made it possible to schedule the sessions without disrupting either activity. The second obstacle concerned the classroom environment. The room was quite hot, and some students lost focus, joked, or talked with their classmates during explanations. In response, the researcher increased interaction through questions and discussion, particularly by asking students who appeared distracted to share concrete examples of negative conformity that they had experienced or observed after each point of the material had been explained. This strategy brought students' attention back to the material, encouraged them to speak, and helped them understand the content through their own experiences. These experiences show that the effectiveness of classroom guidance depends not only on well-prepared material but also on the counselor's ability to manage time, communication, and classroom dynamics responsively, which is consistent with the emphasis on implementation quality in the literature on school-based programs (Durlak et al., 2022; van Loon et al., 2020).

Implications and Limitations

The findings have practical implications for school counselors. Classroom guidance can be scheduled within existing timetables, reaches every student in a class, and requires no special equipment, which makes it a feasible first-line preventive service for negative conformity. The consistent decrease across all students, including those who started in the highest categories, suggests that class-wide delivery can benefit the whole class without

singling out particular students. Counselors may also consider giving more time to the cohesiveness aspect, for example by helping students identify friendships and groups in which belonging does not depend on taking part in harmful behavior.

The study also has several limitations. First, the one-group design did not include a control group, so the observed change cannot be attributed with certainty to the intervention; maturation, testing effects, regression toward the mean, and other events during the study period remain possible alternative explanations (Sorjonen et al., 2023; Stratton, 2019). Second, the sample consisted of a single class of 28 students at one school, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Third, the study covered a short period, and no follow-up measurement was carried out, so it is not known whether the reduction was maintained. Fourth, the outcome was measured only with a self-report scale administered by the researcher who also delivered the intervention, which may have encouraged socially desirable responses; the validity and reliability coefficients of the scale should also be reported in future work. Fifth, the categories were defined relative to the pretest distribution, so the posttest categories indicate relative rather than absolute levels of negative conformity. Future studies should use quasi-experimental or randomized designs with comparison classes, include follow-up measurements, and combine self-reports with information from peers, teachers, or observed behavior, as recommended in research on peer influence (Giletta et al., 2021; Veenstra & Laninga-Wijnen, 2022).

CONCLUSION

This study found that classroom guidance services had a significant effect in reducing the negative conformity behavior of eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 11 Tarakan. The mean negative conformity score decreased from 92.29 at the pretest to 69.18 at the posttest, and all 28 students, who had initially been spread from the very high to the very low categories, were in the very low category after the intervention. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test yielded $Z = -4.631$ with $p < .001$, every student's score decreased, and the effect size was large ($r = .88$); therefore, H_0 was rejected and H_a was accepted. The decrease was most pronounced for agreement and obedience, whereas cohesiveness proved somewhat more resistant to change. Classroom guidance delivered in a structured way, without supplementary media, can therefore be used as one of the basic guidance and counseling services for reducing students' negative conformity at school. Because the study used a one-group design with a single class and no follow-up, these results should be confirmed through controlled designs, larger samples, and longer-term measurement.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

H.A.: conceptualization, investigation, design and delivery of the classroom guidance

sessions, data collection, formal analysis, and writing–original draft. S.R.: supervision, methodology, validation of the research instrument, and writing–review and editing. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal conflicts of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this manuscript.

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