

# EXPRESSIVE PATTERN DRAWING IN GROUP COUNSELING FOR VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL REGULATION IMPROVEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

Emotional regulation is an essential aspect of students' development, particularly for vocational high school students who are in a critical period of emotional and social adjustment. However, many students still experience difficulties in managing their emotions adaptively, which may negatively affect their learning process and social interactions. Therefore, appropriate and developmentally relevant interventions are needed. This study aimed to examine the effect of group counseling based on expressive pattern drawing on students' emotional regulation abilities. This study employed a quantitative approach using a pre-experimental *One Group Pretest–Posttest Design*. The respondents consisted of eleventh-grade students at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya who demonstrated low emotional regulation abilities and were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using an emotional regulation questionnaire with a four-point Likert scale, which had been tested for validity and reliability, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.832. The intervention was conducted through group counseling sessions utilizing expressive pattern drawing techniques over five sessions. Data analysis was performed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with the assistance of SPSS version 25. The results indicated an improvement in emotional regulation abilities among all participants after the intervention. The Wilcoxon test revealed an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.027 (< 0.05), indicating that group counseling based on expressive pattern drawing had a significant effect on improving emotional regulation abilities among vocational high school students.

**Keywords:** Group Counseling, Expressive Art, Pattern Drawing, Emotional Regulation

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescent development in the era of globalization is marked by accelerated social change, advances in information technology, and increased academic and social pressures. These conditions make adolescents vulnerable to emotional problems, particularly in recognizing, expressing, and controlling emotions adaptively. Santrock (2016) states that rapid social change and the influence of digital media often trigger emotional confusion in adolescents. WHO data (2021) shows that mental health disorders are experienced by around 14% of children and adolescents aged 10-19 years worldwide, but most of them have not been identified and treated adequately. A similar situation occurs in Indonesia, where approximately 9.8% of adolescents are reported to experience emotional mental disorders (Antara News, 2022). Aggressive behavior, difficulty managing anger, and social conflicts among adolescents that lead to violence are indications of low emotional regulation skills in this age group.

Adolescents are the nation's future generation who are in a phase of development towards personality maturity and emotional independence (Yusuf, 2012). At this stage, adolescents have a high level of curiosity, an exploratory tendency, and a strong need for social recognition (Ali, 2011). Schools have a strategic role in supporting students' emotional development through guidance and counseling services. The development of emotional intelligence is an integral part of holistic education (Goleman, 1995). One of the main components of emotional intelligence is the ability to regulate emotions, which is the ability of individuals to understand, manage, and express emotions constructively (Salovey & Mayer, 1990).

Students with good emotional regulation tend to be able to cope with pressure, establish positive social relationships, and exhibit adaptive behavior in the learning process (Mayer et al., 2016). Conversely, low emotional regulation skills have the potential to cause learning difficulties, social conflicts, and deviant behavior (Elizabeth, 2016).

Initial observations at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya show that most 11th grade students have difficulty controlling their emotions. Data from the Student Needs Questionnaire (AKPD) shows that 75.5% of 102 students stated that they were unable to manage their emotions well. This finding is reinforced by the students' daily behavior, such as being easily provoked, showing excessive anger, using harsh language, aggressive behavior, difficulty working together in groups, and a tendency to withdraw from social environments. These behavioral patterns reflect the students' low emotional regulation skills and emotional intelligence, which have the potential to negatively impact their psychological well-being, social relationships, and academic success (Zins, 2004).

Guidance and counseling teachers play an important role in intervening in students' emotional problems through counseling services. One service that can be used is group counseling, which allows students to share experiences, gain social support, and learn emotional skills in a safe and structured environment (Corey, 2011). Group counseling is considered effective and efficient for addressing issues experienced by a number of students simultaneously, while also facilitating social interaction as a means of natural emotional learning (Gladding, 2012).

However, not all adolescents are able to express their emotions verbally. Limited emotional vocabulary and concerns about social judgment often become obstacles in the verbal counseling process (Malchiodi, 2003). Therefore, an alternative approach that is nonverbal and creative is needed. Art expression techniques, particularly pattern drawing, are one approach that can be used in group counseling to help students express and manage their emotions symbolically (McNiff, 2004). This approach emphasizes that the process of pattern making has a therapeutic effect because it involves concentration, repetitive hand movements, and visual focus, which can reduce physiological activity and help individuals enter a relaxed state (Curry & Kasser, 2005). This therapeutic effect arises because of the structured visual patterns, allowing individuals to develop a sense of control over their internal experiences. Theoretically, pattern drawing can be understood as a form of distraction and emotional response modulation as described in Gross's emotion regulation model (2014). Menurut Malchiodi (2003) "*adolescents often struggle to articulate emotional experiences verbally due to limited emotional vocabulary and fear of judgement*," making visual art an effective alternative approach. Through pattern drawing activities, adolescents can express their emotions symbolically without having to express them directly in words. This is in line with Rubin's (2009) opinion that "*art-making provides a safe, non-verbal route for accessing and processing feelings that may be too complex or threatening to express verbally*." Pattern drawing also creates a safe, enjoyable, and non-judgmental experience, making it possible to reach students who are closed off, passive, or reluctant to speak in group counseling. In the context of group counseling, the process of sharing the meaning of artwork helps strengthen empathy, social relationships, and emotional support among students (Yalom & Leszcz, 2020).

Several previous studies relevant to this study show that the application of art therapy or expressive art techniques in group counseling is effective in improving emotional regulation and reducing anxiety in adolescents, such as the study conducted by (Hudzaefa Siddiq, 2025) entitled "Efektivitas Teknik art therapy dalam konseling kelompok terhadap regulasi emosi dan kecemasan akademik siswa" The results of this study indicate that art therapy in group counseling can be considered a useful intervention for overcoming academic anxiety and improving students' emotional regulation at school. Another study was conducted by (Kartika et al., 2021) entitled "Pengaruh art therapy menggambar dalam layanan konseling kelompok dapat meningkatkan pengelolaan emosi marah" The results of this study showed that group

counseling with the application of drawing art therapy can improve anger management in adolescents. However, research that specifically examines the application of pattern drawing art expression in the context of group counseling in vocational schools is still limited. Therefore, this study is important to test the application of pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling in improving the emotional regulation abilities of 11th grade students at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya.

Based on the above description, the hypothesis of this study is that the application of group counseling based on pattern drawing art expression can improve the emotional regulation skills of grade XI students at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya.

## METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design. Quantitative research is a method that produces numerical data that can be measured and analyzed using statistical techniques (Sujarweni, 2014). Creswell & Creswell (2018) explain that quantitative research aims to test theories objectively by observing the relationship between variables measured using standardized instruments. This study aims to determine the effect of applying group counseling based on pattern drawing art expression on students' emotional regulation abilities.

The research design used is a One Group Pretest-Posttest Design, which involves one group of subjects without a comparison group. In this design, measurements are taken before and after the treatment to determine the changes that occur as a result of the intervention. If there is a difference in scores between the pretest and posttest, then the change is assumed to be related to the treatment given (Hastjarjo, 2019). This design is classified as pre-experimental research, in which control over external variables is still limited, resulting in lower internal validity compared to pure experimental designs (Sugiyono, 2023).

The population in this study was all 11th grade students at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya. The selection of 11th grade as the population was based on the results of the Student Needs Questionnaire (AKPD), as well as the consideration that students are in a period of transition and adaptation in a vocational high school environment, making them prone to emotional instability. The research sample was determined using purposive sampling technique, which is the selection of subjects based on certain criteria, specifically students who have a low level of emotional regulation based on the results of the initial measurement or pre-test.

The independent variable in this study was pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling, while the dependent variable was emotional regulation. Pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling is defined as a process of psychological assistance conducted in groups and facilitated by a counselor using pattern drawing activities as a medium to express, explore, and reflect on students' emotional experiences. This technique emphasizes the process of creating art as a means of processing emotions and self-reflection in a safe and supportive group atmosphere. Emotion regulation is defined as the ability of students to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions adaptively in social and academic contexts.

Data collection was conducted using an emotional regulation questionnaire instrument compiled in the form of a four-point Likert scale, namely Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. This instrument consisted of favorable and unfavorable statements. The total score was obtained by adding up the scores of all items, where a high score indicated good emotional regulation ability, while a low score indicated limited emotional regulation. The instrument grid was adapted from research by Yunita Sari & Naqiyah on the development of an emotion regulation scale for vocational school students, with indicators including Acceptance of Emotional Responses, Engaging in Goal-Directed Behavior, Control of Emotional Responses, and Strategies for Emotion Regulation.

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Table 1. Validity Test Results

Statement	r – Calculate	r – Table	P (Sig.)	Description
P1	0,358	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P2	0,251	0,1918	0,010	Valid
P3	0,245	0,1918	0,013	Valid
P4	0,335	0,1918	0,001	Valid
P5	0,184	0,1918	0,063	Not Valid
P6	0,374	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P7	0,448	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P8	0,363	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P9	0,090	0,1918	0,364	Not Valid
P10	0,197	0,1918	0,046	Valid
P11	0,287	0,1918	0,003	Valid
P12	0,390	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P13	0,228	0,1918	0,021	Valid
P14	-0,118	0,1918	0,237	Not Valid
P15	0,373	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P16	0,507	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P17	0,554	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P18	0,417	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P19	0,368	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P20	0,321	0,1918	0,001	Valid
P21	0,542	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P22	0,515	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P23	0,346	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P24	-0,310	0,1918	0,001	Not Valid
P25	0,512	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P26	0,438	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P27	0,541	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P28	0,600	0,1918	0,00	Valid
P29	0,318	0,1918	0,001	Valid
P30	0,167	0,1918	0,091	Not Valid
P31	0,463	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P32	0,421	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P33	0,496	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P34	0,133	0,1918	0,180	Not Valid
P35	0,276	0,1918	0,005	Valid
P36	0,392	0,1918	0,000	Valid
P37	0,299	0,1918	0,002	Valid
P38	0,353	0,1918	0,000	Valid

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.832	32

The validity test of the instrument was conducted on 103 tenth-grade students at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya using Pearson Product Moment correlation with the help of SPSS software. An item statement was declared valid if the calculated  $r$  value was greater than the table  $r$  value. The validity test results showed that of the 38 items tested, 32 items were declared valid and used in the study. The reliability test of the instrument was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The analysis results showed a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.832, which means that the instrument has a high level of reliability and is suitable for use as a data collection tool.

The data analysis technique used in this study was nonparametric statistical analysis. This was due to the relatively small number of research subjects and the ordinal scale data. The statistical test used was the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to determine the difference in students' emotional regulation scores before and after treatment. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25. The testing criteria were that if the Asymp. Sig. value was less than 0.05, the alternative hypothesis was accepted, whereas if the Asymp. Sig. value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was accepted.

This research design was implemented through group counseling services based on pattern drawing art expression, which was arranged in five meetings. The first meeting focused on the group formation stage and introduction to the counseling objectives. In this session, the counselor built a safe and trusting atmosphere through opening activities, group contracts, and ice breaking. Students were invited to recognize various types of emotions that they often experience in their daily lives and express their initial feelings through simple pattern drawing activities as a form of initial nonverbal assessment. The second meeting was aimed at increasing awareness and acceptance of emotions. The counselor facilitated a discussion about frequently occurring emotional experiences, followed by repetitive pattern drawing activities that represented the emotions felt. This activity aimed to help students recognize and accept emotions without judgment and develop self-awareness of their emotional state.

The third session focused on emotion management and adaptive distraction. Students were invited to understand the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behavior through group discussions. Next, students engage in structured pattern drawing activities with specific rhythms and repetitions as a form of attentional deployment and self-calming exercises. The fourth session aims to develop emotion regulation strategies and emotional response control. In this session, students reflect on situations that trigger negative emotions, then express them through more complex pattern drawings as symbols of emotional control and balance. The counselor helps students identify effective emotional regulation strategies that can be applied in daily life.

The fifth meeting is the evaluation and conclusion stage. The counselor facilitates a comprehensive reflection on the changes felt by students after participating in group counseling. Students are asked to express their experiences and the meaning of the pattern drawing process, as well as to develop a plan for applying emotional regulation skills in daily life. At the end of the session, students are given a posttest to measure changes in their emotional regulation abilities after participating in the entire intervention series. This series of activities is designed to help students develop emotional awareness, self-control, and emotional regulation strategies gradually in a safe, supportive, and collaborative group setting.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 11th grade students at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya who had low emotional regulation skills. The research subjects were determined through initial measurements using an emotional regulation questionnaire that met the criteria of validity and reliability. The questionnaire consisted of 32 statements and was distributed to 101 students in grades XI TKJ 1, TKJ 2, AKL 1, AKL 2, and AKL 3 on November 5, 2025. Based on the results of the pre-test data processing, the students' emotional regulation scores were classified into three categories, namely low, medium, and high. The categorization was done using the mean

( $M = 84.11$ ) and standard deviation ( $SD = 13.14$ ). The analysis results showed that there were 18 students in the low category, 62 students in the medium category, and 21 students in the high category. From the low category group, six students were selected as research subjects using purposive sampling technique.

Table 3. Pre-Test Results of Emotional Regulation Ability of Research Subjects

No.	Name	Pre-Test Score	Category
1.	IP	65	Low
2.	NT	58	Low
3.	AA	65	Low
4.	AN	64	Low
5.	JN	62	Low
6.	M	60	Low

Table 3 presents the pre-test scores for emotional regulation abilities of the six research subjects. All subjects were in the low category with scores ranging from 58 to 65. These results indicate that the subjects had limitations in recognizing, managing, and responding to emotions adaptively before receiving treatment.

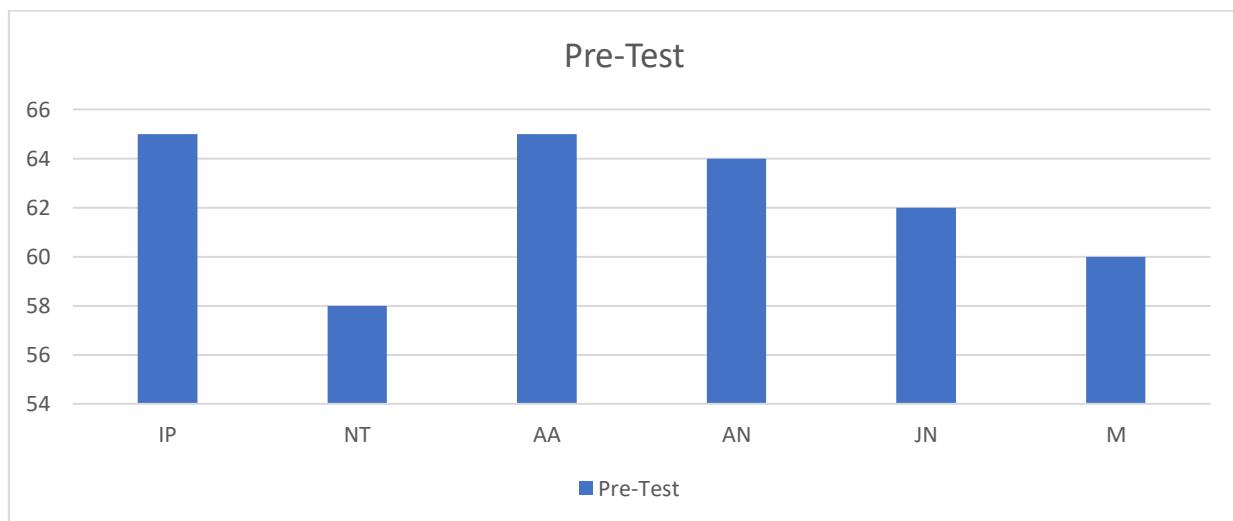


Figure 1. Pre-Test Score Diagram of Emotional Regulation Ability of Research Subjects

Figure 1 shows the distribution of pre-test scores for the subjects' emotional regulation abilities, indicating that all subjects had low emotional regulation abilities before participating in pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling. After the initial measurement, the six subjects participated in pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling treatment, which was conducted in five sessions from November 7 to 17, 2025. Each session focused on the stages of emotion regulation, including emotion recognition, identification of emotional triggers, distraction, changing negative thoughts into adaptive thoughts, and determining the appropriate response when emotions arise. All activities were carried out based on the prepared Service Implementation Plan (SIP). After the entire treatment series was completed, a post-test measurement was conducted using the same instrument. The post-test results showed an increase in emotional regulation scores for all research subjects. The table below shows that five subjects were in the moderate category and one subject was in the high category. The post-test scores ranged from 90 to 111.

Table 4. Post-Test Results of Emotional Regulation Ability of Research Subjects

No.	Nama	Post-Test Score	Category
1.	IP	98	Moderate
2.	NT	90	Moderate
3.	AA	103	Moderate
4.	AN	90	Moderate
5.	JN	95	Moderate
6.	M	111	High

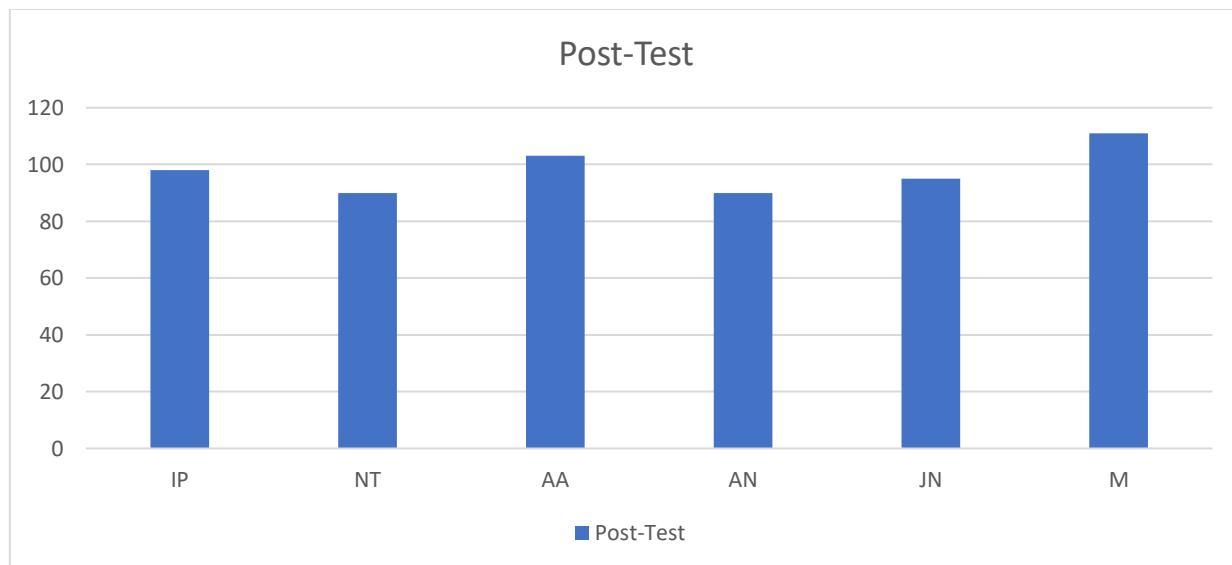


Figure 2. Post-Test Score Diagram of Emotional Regulation Ability of Research Subjects

Figure 2 shows the distribution of post-test scores for the subjects' emotional regulation abilities, which indicates a shift in categories from low to moderate and high after participating in group counseling.

Table 5. Comparison of Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of Emotional Regulation Ability of Research Subjects

No.	Name	Post-Test Score	Pre-Test Score	Difference	Description
1.	IP	98	65	33	Increased
2.	NT	90	58	32	Increased
3.	AA	103	65	38	Increased
4.	AN	90	64	26	Increased
5.	JN	95	62	33	Increased
6.	M	111	60	51	Increased

A comparison of pre-test and post-test scores shows that all subjects experienced an increase in emotional regulation skills. Table 5 shows that the increase in scores ranged from 26 to 51 points, with an average increase of 35.5 points. The average pre-test score of 62.33 increased to 97.83 on the post-test.

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Table 6. Results of the Wilcoxon Test

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Post Test - Pre Test	Negative Ranks	0a	.00	.00
	Positive Ranks	6b	3.50	21.00
	Ties	0c		
	Total	6		

- a. Post Test < Pre Test
- b. Post Test > Pre Test
- c. Post Test = Pre Test

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Post Test - Pre Test
Z	-2.207b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.027

- a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test
- b. Based on negative ranks.

To test the significance of the difference between pre-test and post-test scores, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was conducted using IBM SPSS version 25. The analysis results showed an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.027 (< 0.05). In addition, all subjects were in the positive ranks, which means there was no decrease in scores on the post-test. Thus, it can be concluded that group counseling based on pattern drawing art expression has a significant effect on improving the emotional regulation abilities of vocational high school students.

#### Discussion

This study aims to determine the effect of pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling on the emotional regulation abilities of vocational high school students. The results show a significant increase in emotional regulation abilities in all subjects after participating in group counseling treatment. This increase indicates that group counseling is able to provide a safe space for students to express their emotional experiences, share problems, and obtain support from other group members. Group dynamics help students realize that the emotional problems they experience are not something they experience individually, but are also experienced by others. These findings are in line with Basuki's (2015) opinion that group counseling is effective in improving social and emotional skills through interaction and support among members.

The use of pattern drawing as a counseling medium has been proven to help students express emotions that are difficult to express verbally. Pattern drawing activities allow students to visualize their emotions, recognize emotional triggers, and process emotional responses in a more adaptive manner. The process of transforming images also helps students accept their emotions without rejecting them, so that emotions can be managed in a healthier way. The results of this study are in line with the research by Astuti et al. (2022) which states that art therapy activities, such as drawing and coloring, are effective in helping individuals manage stress and emotions. Research by Rizky et al. (2020) also shows that therapeutic art activities, especially mandala art, can reduce anxiety and increase individual calmness. Repetitive patterns such as circles and waves have a calming effect and help improve focus and emotional awareness. The difference in the level of improvement in emotional regulation skills in each subject was influenced by their initial

emotional condition, openness during the counseling process, and each student's ability to apply the emotional regulation strategies they had learned. However, all subjects showed positive changes, reinforcing the finding that group counseling based on pattern drawing art expression can be effectively applied in the context of guidance and counseling services in vocational schools.

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the collection of pre-test data using a Google Form-based questionnaire allows for discrepancies between students' answers and their actual emotional conditions. In addition, not all target students filled out the questionnaire due to other school activities, such as competition training and student absences. Second, there were technical obstacles in conducting group counseling, such as the absence of members in one of the sessions and time constraints due to the lesson schedule. Third, the number of research subjects was relatively small and only involved one group without a control group, so the results of the study cannot be generalized widely. Nevertheless, this study still provides an empirical description of the application of group counseling based on pattern drawing art expression in improving the emotional regulation skills of vocational high school students.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research and discussions that have been conducted, it can be concluded that pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling is effective in improving the emotional regulation abilities of 11th grade students at SMK Sejahtera Surabaya. Before receiving treatment, all research subjects had low emotional regulation abilities, as indicated by their pre-test scores. After participating in five group counseling sessions, there was an increase in emotional regulation skills in all subjects, as seen from the increase in post-test scores to the moderate to high category. The pattern drawing art expression-based group counseling process helped students recognize emotions, understand situations that trigger emotions, manage attention, change negative thoughts to be more adaptive, and determine the appropriate response when emotions arise. The Wilcoxon test results showed a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, so it can be concluded that group counseling based on pattern drawing art expression can be applied as an alternative guidance and counseling service to improve the emotional regulation abilities of vocational high school students.

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