

Enhancing Self-Understanding in Juvenile Offenders Through Group Counseling at Marsudi Putra Social Rehabilitation Center Surabaya

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Abstract: Children in conflict with the law (ABH) face developmental barriers in identity formation and self-regulation due to traumatic backgrounds and inadequate support systems. This internship program at UPT PRSMP Surabaya applied social psychology principles by integrating structured group counseling and daily rehabilitation routines. Observations indicated improvements in self-confidence, emotional recognition, social communication, and personal motivation among participants. The Johari Window-based group counseling effectively promoted emotional and interpersonal self-awareness by combining guided reflections and symbolic tools like metaphorical animal character cards. As a result, participants showed greater openness, emotional clarity, and readiness for reintegration into society. This program was made possible by the Department of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, and the support of UPT PRSMP Surabaya staff and participating juveniles.

Keywords: Juvenile Offenders, Group Counseling, Self-Understanding, Social Rehabilitation, Johari Window

1. INTRODUCTION

Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH) frequently face major psychosocial challenges such as identity confusion, emotional suppression, underdeveloped self-concept, and limited access to nurturing environments like education or positive social support. Prolonged exposure to neglect or delinquent environments leaves these adolescents typically aged 14-18 vulnerable to recidivism, shame, and alienation if structured psychosocial intervention is absent (Miftahuddin et al., 2023). A core developmental need for these youths is self-understanding, which means recognizing their own emotions, strengths, triggers, and life goals (Rahmayanti et al., 2024). Poor self-awareness is linked to impulsivity, oppositional behavior, and maladaptive coping methods, making the cultivation of self-understanding crucial for their behavioral transformation and successful rehabilitation (Wahyudi et al., 2024).

To address these issues, group counseling especially using the Johari Window model has proven effective in institutional settings. Unlike individual therapy, group counseling offers shared exploration, feedback, and reflection that foster openness and self-acceptance. The Johari Window facilitates self-awareness through feedback and disclosure, prompting youth to discover both known and unknown aspects of themselves, and encouraging emotional openness and trust within the group (Ishmah, 2022). This intervention at UPT PRSMP Surabaya, as part of the UNESA internship program, involved six adolescent males engaging in structured sessions that combined sharing, metaphorical tools, and reflection to foster curiosity, connection, and transformation

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The implementation of the intervention took place at the UPT Perlindungan dan Rehabilitasi Sosial Marsudi Putra (PRSMP) Surabaya, involving 6 institutionalized adolescents aged 14–18 years, all categorized as Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH). Participants were selected based on their availability, willingness to participate in group activities, and observed psychosocial needs. Referrals were typically received from the police, the court system, or social welfare agencies.

Group counseling activities were structured around the Johari Window model, which fosters individual self-awareness and mutual feedback within an interpersonal group setting. Interactive elements such as metaphorical animal character cards, guided journaling, psychological reflection games, and emotion identification sessions were used to support emotional expression and cognitive insight development.

The intervention program spanned two consecutive weeks, during which weekly group counseling sessions were conducted. Each session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and included psychoeducation, self-disclosure exercises, and peer feedback. The intern (Tita Amelia Ayudistya) served as the facilitator, with ongoing supervision from institutional staff. Data collection techniques included naturalistic observation, informal interviews, individual worksheets, and written reflection logs.

All procedures were conducted with institutional consent, and participants' identities were anonymized with pseudonyms in reporting. Ethical conduct adhered to the internship and research guidelines set forth by the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Surabaya (UNESA).

Several semi-structured questions uncovered deeper layers of participants' identities:

1. *What are your strengths and weaknesses?*
2. *What do you like or dislike about yourself?*
3. *What makes you stressed or anxious?*
4. *How do you manage negative emotions?*
5. *What are your personal goals in 5–10 years?*

Most participants could clearly articulate personal aspirations, such as furthering their education, contributing to their family's success, or starting a micro-business. Their reflections symbolized progress from uncertainty toward clarity and commitment in life direction

3. RESULTS

a. Observational Results

Throughout the implementation of the group counseling intervention at UPT PRSMP Surabaya, notable improvements were observed in several interpersonal and intrapersonal domains among the Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH). The intervention focused on enhancing self-understanding using the Johari Window framework and applied techniques such as metaphor cards, group reflection, and open discussion.

The table below summarizes key psychosocial outcomes observed in participants across five core domains:

Table 1. Summary of Observed Behavioral Changes After Group Counseling Implementation		
Aspect	Initial Condition	Post-Intervention Response
Self-Confidence	Passive, hesitant to speak, lacked initiative	More open to sharing thoughts, expressed opinions, engaged in peer feedback
Emotional Awareness	Limited ability to recognize and label emotions	Improved identification of personal feelings and emotional triggers
Social Interaction	Isolated, avoided collaboration, reluctant in group tasks	Demonstrated cooperative behaviors, showed empathy and improved communication
Self-Motivation	Low academic/vocational engagement	Expressed future educational goals; participated actively in skill-building sessions
Openness to Feedback	Defensive, resisted correction	Accepted peer suggestions; articulated personal strengths and weaknesses more realistically

b. Interview Results

1. *What are your strengths and weaknesses?*

During the group counseling discussions, many of the ABH participants recognized that they possessed personal strengths, such as being helpful to others, physically resilient, or having a strong will to survive. Some shared that they were good at manual work, loyal to friends, or quick to learn practical skills. However, when asked about their weaknesses, several admitted to having trouble controlling their emotions, especially anger and frustration. Impulsivity, difficulty trusting others, and low patience were also mentioned. A few participants confessed that they tend to shut down emotionally or become defensive in stressful situations.

2. *What do you like or dislike about yourself?*

Most of the youth expressed mixed feelings about themselves. On one hand, they liked their ability to keep going despite hardship, their sense of loyalty, or their independence. On the other hand, many admitted they disliked the parts of themselves that were "quick-tempered" or "hard to open up to others." Some talked about regretting past choices and feeling ashamed of their actions yet felt unsure how to let go of that guilt. A few participants said they didn't know what to like about themselves, indicating a fragile or underdeveloped self-concept.

3. *What makes you stressed or anxious?*

Several participants described family-related concerns as their main sources of stress. Being away from their parents or worrying about how their families were doing without them was a common theme. Others mentioned uncertainty about their future such as not knowing what life would be like after leaving the facility, or whether they would be accepted back into their communities. Some spoke openly of guilt and fear of rejection. Group

discussions revealed that conflicts with peers, unresolved trauma, and a lack of control over their lives also contributed to feelings of anxiety or tension.

4. *How do you manage negative emotions?*

The boys had varied ways of dealing with negative emotions. Some said they often chose to stay silent, isolate themselves, or sleep to avoid confrontation. Others shared that they tried to calm themselves by listening to music, writing in journals (as encouraged during sessions), or talking with specific staff members they trusted. While a few acknowledged having previously acted out in aggression or withdrawn completely, they also realized through counseling that these reactions often made things worse. The group process allowed them to recognize more positive outlets such as sharing with peers, reflecting before reacting, and applying emotion regulation techniques introduced during the sessions.

5. *What are your personal goals in 5–10 years?*

Although initially most participants struggled to articulate clear future goals, many of them became more reflective and motivated as the sessions progressed. They began to express aspirations such as securing an honest living, supporting their families especially their mothers and starting small businesses, like opening a barbershop or running a motorbike wash. Some shared dreams of returning to school or learning a specific skill. Interestingly, participants who were previously disengaged started to verbalize goals once they heard their peers speak, showing how peer influence in a supportive setting helped reignite their sense of purpose.

c. Johari Window Insight

Application of Johari Window revealed expansion in the "open self" quadrant, reduction in "blind" and "hidden" selves. This shift indicated growing internal alignment and external communication. The metaphorical animal card activity proved especially useful to ease discomfort in self-revelation, promoting symbolic but effective interpersonal dialogue.

4. DISCUSSIONS

The findings from the group counseling intervention at UPT PRSMP Surabaya uncover meaningful contributions to the psychosocial rehabilitation of Anak Berhadapan dengan Hukum (ABH). Over the course of the sessions, participants demonstrated notable shifts both subtle and overt in their self-perception, emotional expression, and social behavior. These developments are not merely anecdotal but can be understood as markers of psychological growth, catalyzed through structured reflection and peer interaction. The Johari Window model, which underpinned the intervention, proved to be particularly effective in opening avenues for trust-building and introspection within this high-risk population.

A particularly important finding lies in the increased willingness of participants to give and receive feedback an interpersonal skill that often requires emotional safety, self-restraint, and empathy. At the outset, many of the adolescents exhibited signs of withdrawal, sarcasm, or deflection when presented with feedback from peers or facilitators. Over time, however, those behaviors gave way to curiosity, deeper listening, and even moments of vulnerability. This attitudinal shift suggests not only growing self-acceptance but also a loosening of internalized defenses typically shaped by past trauma or social rejection. The intervention gave structure to what might otherwise be a volatile emotional landscape, using dialogue and symbolic tools to soften rigid self-concepts and reduce oppositional behavior.

These observations are aligned with previous research (Ishmah, 2022; Wahyudi et al., 2024) which supports the use of Johari Window in marginal youth settings, particularly where emotional literacy and self-awareness are underdeveloped. Still, the current context adds unique insight, as the intervention took place within a confined rehabilitation center where participants' social environments are largely static. Within this restrictive setting, the emergence of openness and cooperation takes on greater significance, as it signals the potential for resilience-building even in environments that are psychologically taxing or authoritarian in structure.

Compared to previous studies that implemented reflective group counseling among at-risk adolescents (such as Miftahuddin & Annisa, 2023), this project reinforces the idea that continuity is key. It was through repeated use of feedback cycles, emotional exploration activities, and metaphorical expression (e.g., animal card reflections) that participants began to construct more coherent narratives about themselves. This process, in turn, appeared to activate a sense of personal agency. Participants who once avoided discussing their futures began to speak about goals not abstractly, but in specific terms linked to skills, family duty, and vocational hope. For ABH youth many of whom have experienced rejection or failure such forward-facing talk reflects a shift away from resignation and toward restoration of identity.

Another strength of the intervention lies in its integrative and context-sensitive design. By aligning the counseling process with the established routines and social norms of the institution, the program minimized disruption while enhancing relevance. Psychoeducational themes were embedded within familiar formats visual tools, open-sharing circles, and low-pressure creative tasks which allowed for greater engagement, especially among participants with limited formal education. The holistic structure also made room for both verbal and non-verbal modes of processing an essential feature when working with emotionally guarded populations.

Despite these promising outcomes, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, not all participants responded uniformly; a small subset remained disengaged or resistant throughout much of the program. For adolescents with deeply entrenched distrust or unresolved trauma, short-term interventions may be insufficient to produce meaningful change. The limitations of time also constrained the depth to which the hidden and blind quadrants of the Johari Window could be explored. Emotional defenses, particularly among youth who have experienced betrayal or abandonment, often require more extended therapeutic containment to shift in lasting ways.

Additionally, the methodology leaned heavily on qualitative techniques namely facilitator observations, participant self-reporting, and group reflections. While these tools offer rich, grounded insights, the absence of pre- and post-intervention psychometric data limits the ability to quantify change or track long-term effects across broader samples. This calls for future research efforts to incorporate mixed methods approaches, possibly integrating behavioral assessments, psychological scales, or follow-up studies involving family or community reintegration outcomes.

Taken together, the intervention offers compelling support for the use of structured, relationship-centered group counseling programs in the rehabilitation of incarcerated youth in Indonesia. It affirms the potential of tools like the Johari Window not just in promoting self-awareness, but in restoring dignity, perspective, and connection in populations that are often pathologized or institutionally silenced. While not without its constraints, the program stands as an example of how thoughtful design, contextual sensitivity, and psychological insight can come together to foster meaningful change.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The structured group counseling program implemented at UPT PRSMP Surabaya successfully contributed to enhancing self-understanding and self-confidence among Children in Conflict with the Law (ABH). By applying Johari Window-based techniques in a rehabilitative setting, participants showed increased emotional awareness, openness in interpersonal communication, and willingness to explore future aspirations. Although the intervention faced challenges such as participant resistance and limited time, it demonstrated potential as a replicable model for psychosocial recovery in institutional contexts focused on marginalized youth.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research was made possible thanks to the support from the Department of Psychology, Universitas Negeri Surabaya, and all staff at UPT PRSMP Surabaya. Special thanks are given to the internship participants the ABH juveniles who shared their stories, challenges, and hopes throughout the program. The author also is especially grateful to **Ms. Siti Jaro'ah** for her valuable input during program evaluation, and to fellow interns for the cooperation and moral encouragement that greatly supported the success of this program.

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