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## Solution-focused brief counseling in educational setting: a systematic literature review

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### Abstract

The use of counseling models that are relevant to the problems and symptoms of psychological disorders is needed to support the implementation of effective counseling services, especially in educational setting. Solution-focused brief counseling (SFBC) is one of the counseling models that has recommended to be used in the implementation of counseling services. This study aims to reported the review of literature related to the used of SFBC in educational settings. Results of this study found that SFBC has been widely used in educational settings both in schools and universities. The most frequently used counseling techniques are the exception question technique and the miracle question technique. Psychological symptoms/disorders that can be intervened with SFBC include academic procrastination, aggressive behavior, anxiety and academic stress, as well as substance abuse and trauma. Results of this study have implications for the use of SFBC in educational setting.

**Keywords:** Solution-focused brief counseling, educational counseling, systematic literature review, Prisma

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## Introduction

Solution-focused brief counseling (SFBC) is one of the post-modern counseling approaches initiated by Insoo Kim Berg and de Shazer in 1980 by modifying the strategy of a brief approach or solution-focused therapy (Quick, 1996). In contrast to some modern counseling approaches that seek to find detailed problem descriptions, in SFBC the problem identification process is not carried out in depth, but rather focuses on the possibility of alternative solutions available to alleviate the problems that occurred (Hanton, 2011). Therefore, the main purpose of SFBC is not to find the cause of the problem, but the problem is only used to understand the situation at hand.

The key concept in SFBC is exceptions, or when the problem / unfavorable situation experienced by the counselee does not occur / does not exist (de Shazer et al., 2007; Hanton, 2011). If the exception has been identified by the counselee, then the counselor will take advantage of the exception using a systemic concept called deviation amplifying which aims to extend and expand the part of the absence of the problem/unfavorable condition that is expected to bring changes to the counselee's life (de Shazer et al., 2007). Based on these key concepts, SFBC always directs counselees to find solutions by utilizing their resources and strengths.

Several studies have reported the effectiveness of SFBC. Study by Gingerich & Peterson (2015) explained that SFBC is an effective psychological intervention that used in various fields, and more efficient because it can be carried out in a shorter time than other counseling models. The application of SFBC in educational settings, especially the implementation of counseling services in schools is also suitable for school counselors because it can help students to focus more on their strengths, potentials, and resources as a solution to the problems or unfavorable situations they are facing. (O'Connell et al., 2014). In line with the results of the study by Haron et al., (2020) who recommends that SFBC can be

implemented in various settings, especially those that require a counseling process that tends to be fast but still effective, such as counseling services in schools (Haron et al., 2020). This study aims to examine the relevant literature in order to describe how the use of SFBC in educational settings, the most frequently used counseling techniques, and psychological problems/symptoms that can intervened with the SFBC model.

## Method

### Literature Resources and Search Strategy

This study is a literature review conducted by following PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses) (Moher et al., 2009). Literature search was performed using Publish or Perish (PoP) through several database including Google Scholar, Crossref, and Semantic Scholar. Systematic search carried out using keywords including "solution focused-brief therapy, solution-focused brief counseling, sfbc, sfmt and school counseling". Systematic search was conducting on the literature published in 2010 – 2022. Furthermore, the search results were analyzed using Vos Viewer to obtain a visualization of terms that were widely studied related to SFBC and researchers who studied about SFBC. Visualization

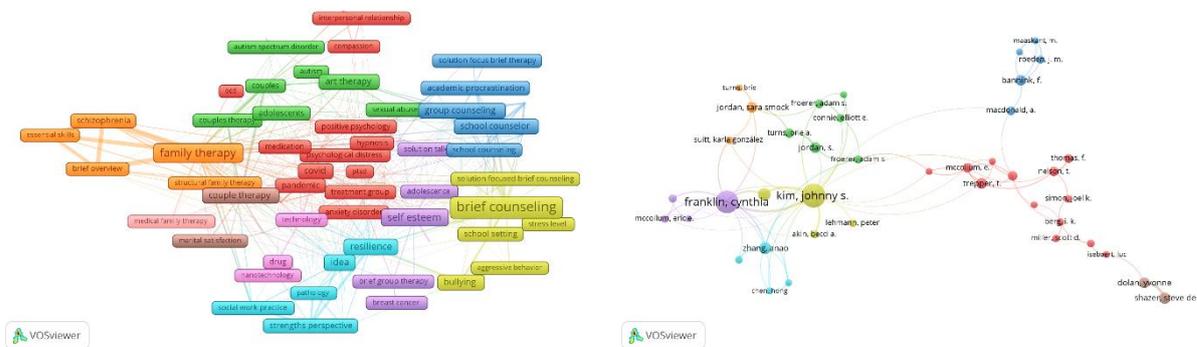


Figure 1 <Visualization of SFBC Trend and Researcher in the last 10 Years>

based on the results of the search for studies related to SFBC are as follows.

Based on the visualization in figure 01, there are several terms that has been widely research related to SFBC in the last ten years. The terms colored in yellow are the topics or field that still rarely studied. Author or researcher who have studied topics relevant to SFBC are also visualized. This visualization help authors in conducting research question of this study.

### Eligibility Criteria

A total of 950 studies related to the keywords then selected by looking at the abstracts of each article. The inclusion criteria were as follows (1) full-paper are available and accessible, (2) type of study is experimental research, (3) study is conducted in an educational setting, and (4) there is at least one counseling technique implemented. The exclusion criteria were as follows: (1) full-paper are not available or accessible, (2) study not published in a reputable journal, and (3) meta-analytic, systematic, or narrative review, or book chapters.

### Study Selection, Data Extraction and Synthesis

Studies were independently reviewed by authors using two-step process. The first screening and selection were performed based on article title and abstract. The second screening and selections were performed based on retrieved full-paper, then extracted in a spreadsheet (Moher et al., 2009). The observed data elements were the author, years of publication, research design, subject of research, psychological problems/symptoms, counseling techniques, and the results of study. Results of systematic review were summarized in tables and narratively synthesized.

## Results and Discussion

Figure 02 shows the flowchart of identification, selection, and eligibility assessment of the study for analysis. Based on the inclusion criteria, 10 studies were included in qualitative synthesis to systematic review in answering the research question.

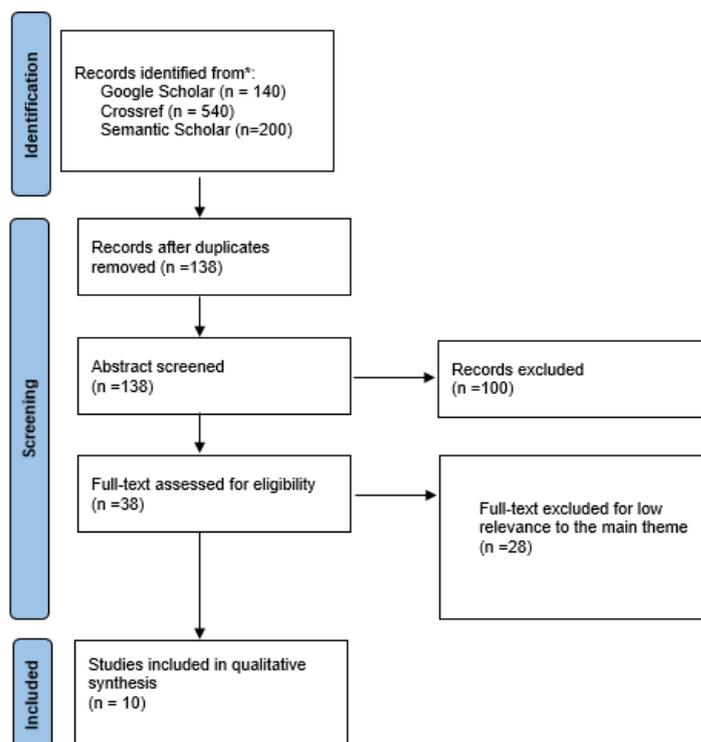


Figure 2 <Flowchart for the Search and Selection Process>

The characteristics of the research that meet the eligibility criteria are summarized in table 01 below.

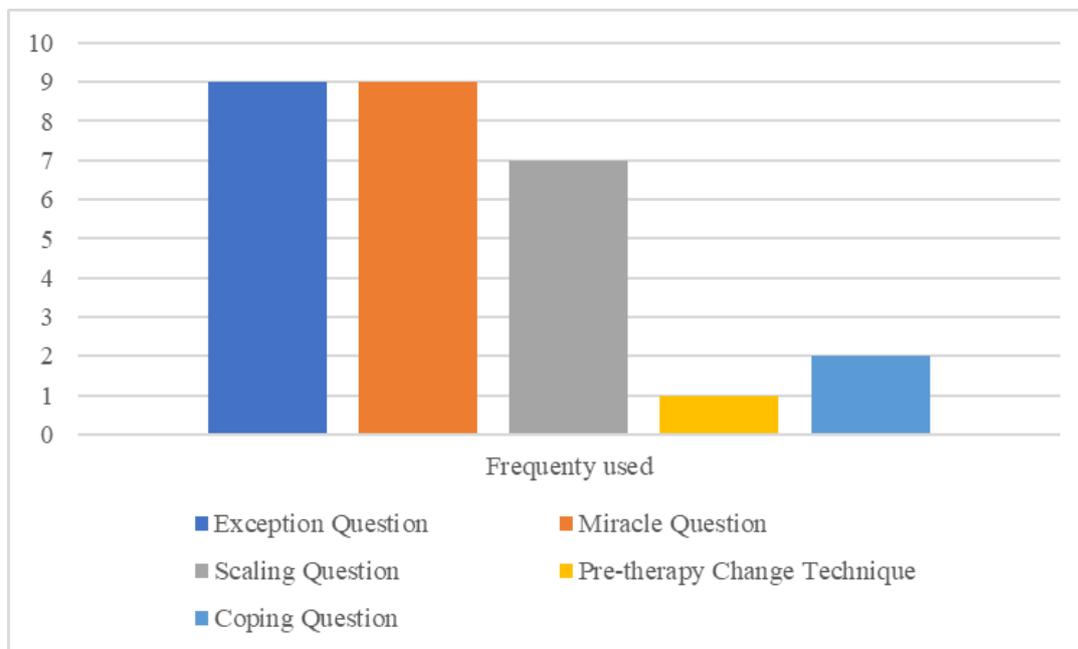
Table 1 <Characteristic of Included Studies>

Author(s)	Study Design and Sample Size	Psychological Problems/Symptoms	Counseling Techniques	Results
Kurnanto, M. E. (2019).	One group pretest-posttest, N = 15	Academic procrastination	Exception question, miracle question, scaling problems	The results of this study show differences between student's academic procrastination before following SFBC intervention and after following the intervention.
Wiretna, C. D., Saputra, W. N. E., Muarifah, A., & Barida, M. (2020).	Quasi-experimental, N = 6	Aggressive behavior	Pre-therapy change technique, scaling question, miracle question, exception question	This study reported a decrease of participant's aggressive behaviors level after attending five sessions of SFBC.
Nugroho, A. R., Guswantoro, T., Gunawan, R.,	Quasi-experimental, N = 11	Low self-esteem	Miracle question, exception question	There is an average difference between the level of self-esteem of students before treatment and after treatment, which means that there is an effect of implementing a solution focused brief counseling

Author(s)	Study Design and Sample Size	Psychological Problems/Symptoms	Counseling Techniques	Results
Lumbantobing, S. S., & Murniarti, E. (2021).				approach to develop students' self-esteem.
Munir, A., Sugiyo, S., & Mulawarman, M. (2021).	Randomized pretest-posttest comparison control group N = 14	Student's technostress	Group counseling with SFBC approach	The intervention in the SFBC experimental group appeared to be more effective to reduce the technostress of students who use smartphone compared to the mindfulness training group.
Saadatzaade, R., & Khalili, S. (2012).	Pretest-posttest control group N = 44	Self-regulation	Miracle question, exception question	After seven sessions group counseling with students, the self-regulation and academic achievement of students in the counseling intervention group were significantly increased.
Fitriyah, F. K. (2017).	Experimental method using single A-B subject design N = 6	Aggressive behavior	Exceptional questions, miracle questions, and scaling questions	The results show positive results, meaning that SFBC has generally been shown to be effective in reducing aggressive behavior in four students in all aspects of aggressive behavior.
Kim, J. S., Brook, J., & Akin, B. A. (2018).	Randomized-controlled trial design N = 64	Substance use and trauma	Pre-therapy change technique, scaling question, miracle question, exception question	Both groups decreased on the Addiction Severity Index-Self-Report and the Trauma Symptom Checklist-40. This result showed the effective use of SFBT in treating substance use and trauma.
Ardi, Z., Daharmis, Neviyarni, & Ifdil. (2021).	Experimental design N = 5	Academic stress	Scaling question, miracle question, exception question	There is a significance differences between pretest and posttest that shown the significance decrease on participants academic stress after attending SFBC.
Suranata, K., & Prakoso, B. B. (2020).	One group pretest-posttest experiment N = 30	Academic anxiety	Miracle question, scaling question, exception question, coping question	Web-based SFBC has reported to be acceptable and feasible among students and counselors. The results of this study also reported the effective used of web-based SFBC in reduce student's academic anxiety.
Kristyaningrum, W., & Said, H. (2019).	One group pretest-posttest experiment N = 3	Academic procrastination	Miracle question, scaling question, exception question	There is a significance decrease of student's academic procrastination after following SFBC intervention.

Based on the literature review conducted, several findings were obtained as follows. Munir et al., (2021); Nugroho et al., (2021); and Wiretna et al., (2020) reported the use of SFBC model in schools involving student participants, while the study of Ardi et al., (2021)&Kurnanto (2019) reported the use of the SFBC model in the implementation of counseling services in universities. This result shows that the SFBC model has been widely used in educational settings.

The most frequently used techniques in SFBC model were categorized based on the frequency of study reported the implementation of each counseling techniques. Result of literature review show the most frequently used techniques are illustrated in figure 02.



**Figure 3 <Frequently Used Counseling Techniques in SFBC>**

Figure 02 shows that the most frequently used techniques in SFBC was the exception question and miracle question which reported to be used in 9 studies, then the scaling question reported to be used in 7 studies, and the coping question was reported to be used in 2 studies. While the most rarely used techniques is pre-therapy change which is only reported in one study.

The results of the literature review also found several psychological problems/disorders that could be intervened with the SFBC model. Kristyaningrum & Said (2019) and Kurnanto (2019) report the use of the SFBC model to reduce academic procrastination experienced by students. Meanwhile, the study of Fitriyah (2018) and Wiretna et al., (2020) reported the use of the SFBC model to reduce aggressive behavior in students. The study of Ardi et al., (2021) and Suranata & Prakoso (2020) described the use of the SFBC model in reducing anxiety and academic stress. SFBC model is also reported to be implemented to overcome the problem of low self-esteem and self-regulation (Nugroho et al., 2021; Saadatzade & Khalili, 2012). Other psychological problems that can be intervened with SFBC model are student's technostress, substance abuse, and trauma (Kim et al., 2018; Munir et al., 2021).

Based on the results of the literature review, the SFBC model is used in educational settings both in schools and universities. This is in line with the studies of Gingerich & Peterson (2015) and Haron et al., (2020) which recommend the use of the SFBC model in educational settings because the implementation time tends to be short (brief). The most frequently used techniques in SFBC model are the exception question and miracle question techniques. While the psychological problems that are often intervened with the SFBC model include (1) academic procrastination, (2) aggressive behavior, (3) self-regulation and low self-esteem, (4) student's technostress, (5) substance abuse, and (6) trauma.

## Conclusion

Counseling services in educational setting both schools and universities must be supported by implementing a counseling model that is relevant to the psychological problems/symptoms that arise.

SFBC is one of the post-modern counseling models that has been widely used in providing counseling services in educational settings. There are several counseling techniques that can be implemented, including exception question and miracle question techniques. Several studies have reported the effectiveness of implementing the SFBC model in intervening various psychological symptoms/disorders. Further studies are needed to determine the effectiveness of SFBC model in a wider setting and subject.

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