

Research Article

Effect of Narrative Classroom Guidance on Generation Alpha Students' Emotional Regulation

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Received : April 15, 2026

Revised : May 22, 2026

Accepted : June 11, 2026

Available online : June 25, 2026

How to Cite: Nurul Azmi Saragih, Hafiz Ahmad Khan, & Budi Astuti. (2026). Effect of Narrative Classroom Guidance on Generation Alpha Students' Emotional Regulation. Journal Of Psychology, Counseling And Education, 4(2), 125-134. <https://doi.org/10.58355/psy.v4i2.95>

Abstract

This study aims to determine the effect of basic classical guidance services with a narrative approach on optimizing the emotional regulation of Generation Alpha students at SMP Negeri 8 Medan. The phenomenon of low emotional regulation ability in Generation Alpha students represents a specific urgency requiring intervention based on guidance and counseling services. The method used is a quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design. The research sample consisted of 32 students in the experimental class and 29 students in the control class selected through purposive sampling technique. The data collection instrument used an emotional regulation questionnaire developed based on Gross's indicators in Putra et al. (2014), covering: strategies to emotion regulation, engaging in goal directed behavior, control emotion response impulse, and acceptance of emotional response. Hypothesis testing using the Independent Sample t-test showed a t-count value of 7.842 with sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 < 0.05, so H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. The mean posttest value of the experimental class (87.34) was significantly higher than the control class (68.17). Cohen's d effect size = 2.886

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indicates a very large effect. The conclusion confirms that basic classical guidance services with a narrative approach significantly affect the optimization of emotional regulation of Generation Alpha students at SMP Negeri 8 Medan.

Keywords: Classical Guidance Service, Narrative Approach, Emotional Regulation, Generation Alpha, Basic Guidance and Counseling Services.

INTRODUCTION

Generation Alpha (Gen Alpha) refers to individuals born between 2010 and 2025, growing up in an intensively digital ecosystem. McCrindle and Wolfinger (2021) describe Gen Alpha as the most technologically connected, most formally educated, and most materialistic generation compared to their predecessors. These characteristics produce complex consequences for their psychological development, particularly in emotional regulation. Continuous exposure to digital stimuli, accelerated information flow, and limited face-to-face interaction render this generation highly vulnerable to emotional dysregulation.

Emotional regulation is one of the fundamental psychological capacities determining an individual's success in managing emotional responses. Gross (2015) defines emotional regulation as the processes by which individuals influence the emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express those emotions. Adequate emotional regulation directly impacts academic achievement, interpersonal relationships, and mental health.

A preliminary study at SMP Negeri 8 Medan (September-October 2024) revealed that 68.7% of seventh-grade students exhibited indicators of low emotional regulation: (1) emotional outbursts facing difficult tasks; (2) peer conflicts from inability to manage negative emotions; (3) excessive anxiety hindering learning concentration; and (4) impulsive behavior without considering consequences. This confirms the need for systematic intervention through guidance and counseling services.

The research gaps are threefold. First, theoretically, no prior study has specifically integrated the narrative approach into basic classical guidance services as an intervention for optimizing emotional regulation among Generation Alpha students—most prior studies used cognitive-behavioral or REBT approaches. Second, methodologically, previous studies used limited samples without accounting for Generation Alpha's unique characteristics. Third, contextually, no experimental research has examined narrative approach effectiveness in classical guidance services at the junior high school level in North Sumatra, particularly Medan City.

This study addresses these gaps, aiming to determine and analyze the effect of basic classical guidance services with a narrative approach on optimizing the emotional regulation of Generation Alpha students at SMP Negeri 8 Medan, contributing both to theoretical enrichment and to practical advancement in the guidance and counseling field.

Gross (2015), the most influential scholar in this field, defines emotional regulation as the processes by which individuals influence the emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express those emotions. His process model differentiates strategies based on timing in emotion generation:

antecedent-focused strategies and response-focused strategies. Thompson (2019) expands this by emphasizing intrinsic and extrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions in intensity and duration to achieve the individual's desired goals.

Cicchetti et al. (2020) provide a developmental perspective, defining emotional regulation as a capacity that develops gradually throughout life, encompassing the ability to access, use, and modulate emotions in order to achieve optimal environmental adaptation. This is particularly important in the context of junior high school students in early adolescence, when emotional regulation is in a consolidation phase highly vulnerable to environmental influences. Garnefski and Kraaij (2021) add cognitive dimensions through the concept of cognitive emotion regulation strategies.

In this study, emotional regulation is operationalized using Gross's framework in Putra et al. (2014), encompassing four indicators: (1) Strategies to Emotion Regulation the individual's ability to access and apply various strategies for managing negative emotions; (2) Engaging in Goal Directed Behavior the ability to remain focused and goal-oriented despite negative emotions; (3) Control Emotion Response Impulse the ability to inhibit impulsive behavior arising from negative emotions; and (4) Acceptance of Emotional Response the ability to accept emotions without negative self-judgment.

Winkel and Hastuti (2019) define classical guidance services as a preventive and developmental assistance process delivered to all students in a class simultaneously, equipping them with knowledge, attitudes, and essential skills. ASCA (2019) states that classroom guidance is designed to help all students develop academic, career, and social-personal competencies. The 'for all students' characteristic distinguishes it from selective individual or group services. Prayitno and Amti (2020) emphasize that such services must be designed based on valid needs assessment, not mere assumption or habit. In the Indonesian context, Kemendikbudristek (2022) affirms that guidance and counseling services must be designed based on the Pancasila Student Profile and be responsive to students' generational characteristics.

The narrative approach is a postmodern counseling approach developed by Michael White and David Epston in the late 1980s. Corey (2021) explains that it is grounded in the philosophical premise that human reality is constructed through language, social interaction, and life narratives. Key concepts include: thin versus thick descriptions of identity; problem-saturated stories; unique outcomes or sparkling moments; and re-authoring or re-storying—rebuilding a richer and more adaptive life narrative.

Key techniques include: externalization (separating the problem from personal identity), deconstruction (examining dominant narratives), re-authoring (constructing alternative narratives), definitional ceremonies (involving witnesses to reinforce new narratives), and letter writing (preserving new identity narratives). The narrative approach's relevance for Generation Alpha stems from their digital storytelling culture, its strengths-based orientation, and its promotion of agency and

authorship over one's life, enhancing intrinsic motivation to develop emotional regulation abilities.

McCrinkle and Wolfinger (2021) define Generation Alpha as individuals born between 2010 and 2025 the first generation fully born in the 21st century. Their characteristics include: (1) deeper digital nativeness; (2) high visual literacy; (3) rapid multi-tasking; (4) high personalization expectations; and (5) paradoxical social connectivity digitally hyper-connected yet often lonely and socially anxious. Garnefski and Kraaij (2021) find that digitally raised generations tend to develop more reactive, fast-response emotional regulation patterns rather than reflective, long-term regulation consistent with field findings at SMP Negeri 8 Medan. For guidance and counseling, Prayitno and Amti (2020) emphasize that services must be adaptive to generational characteristics, requiring interactive, visual, storytelling, and gamification elements.

Rahmadani and Syahniar (2022) demonstrated that CBT-based classical guidance significantly improved emotional regulation in junior high students ($t = 5.43$; $p < 0.01$), though it did not account for Generation Alpha characteristics. Sari and Wibowo (2023) confirmed narrative therapy's effectiveness in improving self-esteem in individual counseling format ($d = 1.24$), but not in a classical format or for emotional regulation. Nurwidodo et al. (2024) showed that mindfulness-based group guidance significantly improved acceptance of emotional response and control emotion response impulse in Gen Alpha students, affirming the relevance of awareness-based interventions consistent with the reflective and self-awareness nature of the narrative approach.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The design selected was the nonequivalent control group pretest-posttest design (Sugiyono, 2021), involving two groups measured before and after treatment, with grouping based on naturally formed classes.

Table 1. Research Design

Group	Pretest	Treatment	Posttest
Experimental	O ₁	X (Narrative Classical Guidance)	O ₂
Control	O ₃	— (No Special Treatment)	O ₄

Note: O₁ = experimental group pretest; O₂ = experimental group posttest; O₃ = control group pretest; O₄ = control group posttest; X = treatment.

The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 8 Medan, North Sumatra, from October to December 2024. The population comprised 189 eighth-grade students (classes VIII-A to VIII-F, 2024/2025 academic year). Using purposive sampling, Class

VIII-B (n = 32) was selected as the experimental class and Class VIII-D (n = 29) as the control class, based on inclusion criteria including low-to-moderate pretest scores and consistent attendance.

The data collection instrument was an emotional regulation questionnaire based on Gross's framework in Putra et al. (2014), using a five-point Likert scale. Of 40 initial items, 38 were declared valid ($r \text{ count} > r \text{ table} = 0.361$, $n = 30$, $\alpha = 0.05$) and reliability confirmed with Cronbach's Alpha = 0.917. The experimental group received six structured classical guidance sessions using narrative therapy techniques (externalization, deconstruction, re-authoring, and definitional ceremonies), each 45 minutes, over six consecutive weeks.

The six sessions were designed progressively: Session 1 (Emotional Awareness and Life Narrative Introduction), Session 2 (Externalization of Emotional Problems), Session 3 (Identifying Unique Outcomes/Sparkling Moments), Session 4 (Re-authoring the Emotional Narrative), Session 5 (Definitional Ceremonies and Social Support), and Session 6 (Consolidation and Commitment). The control class received regular school guidance without narrative approach implementation.

Data analysis used SPSS Version 26, including descriptive statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality testing, Levene's Test homogeneity testing, Independent Sample t-test, Paired Sample t-test, and Cohen's d effect size calculation. The decision criterion was H_0 rejected if sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistics

Prior to treatment, both groups' pretest scores were assessed to establish baseline equivalence.

Table 2. Pretest Descriptive Statistics for Both Groups

Statistic	Experimental Class (n=32)	Control Class (n=29)
Minimum	62	60
Maximum	85	83
Mean	71.53	70.86
Median	71.00	71.00
Mode	70	70
Std. Deviation	5.72	5.89
Variance	32.71	34.70

Table 2 demonstrates that the pretest means of the experimental (71.53) and control (70.86) classes were relatively equivalent, indicating homogeneous initial emotional regulation ability before treatment.

Table 3. Posttest Descriptive Statistics for Both Groups

Statistic	Experimental Class (n=32)	Control Class (n=29)
Minimum	78	61
Maximum	98	86
Mean	87.34	68.17
Median	87.50	68.00
Mode	88	67
Std. Deviation	5.24	6.11
Variance	27.45	37.34

Table 3 shows a highly significant increase in the experimental class posttest mean (87.34) compared to the pretest (71.53), an increase of 15.81 points. The control class experienced a slight decrease from 70.86 to 68.17, explicable by natural emotional fluctuations without structured intervention.

Table 4. Gain Score Comparison

Group	Mean Pretest	Mean Posttest	Gain Score	N-Gain (%)
Experimental	71.53	87.34	+15.81	55.7%
Control	70.86	68.17	-2.69	-9.2%

Prerequisite Analysis Tests

Normality testing (Kolmogorov-Smirnov) yielded the following results:

Table 5. Normality Test Results

Data	Sig. (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)	Result
Pretest Experimental	0.154	Normal (sig. > 0.05)
Pretest Control	0.168	Normal (sig. > 0.05)
Posttest Experimental	0.137	Normal (sig. > 0.05)
Posttest Control	0.143	Normal (sig. > 0.05)

All data yielded sig. > 0.05, confirming normal distribution. Homogeneity testing (Levene's Test) yielded $F = 0.742$, sig. = 0.392 > 0.05, confirming equal variances. Both assumptions for parametric testing were satisfied.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 6. Independent Sample t-Test Results (Posttest)

	Levene's Test F	Levene's Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal var. assumed	0.742	0.392	7.842	59	0.000	19.172

Table 6 shows $t = 7.842$ with $\text{sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.000 < 0.05$; therefore H_0 was rejected and H_1 was accepted. There is a significant difference between the experimental class posttest mean ($M = 87.34$) and the control class ($M = 68.17$), with a mean difference of 19.172 points favoring the experimental class.

Table 7. Paired Sample t-Test Results (Experimental Group)

	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest Experimental	71.53	5.72			
Posttest Experimental	87.34	5.24	18.642	31	0.000

The Paired Sample t-test confirmed a very significant increase in the experimental group ($t = 18.642$, $\text{sig.} = 0.000$). Cohen's d was calculated as $d = (87.34 - 71.53) / 5.48 = 2.886$, indicating a very large effect ($d > 0.8$), demonstrating the substantial impact of the narrative classical guidance intervention.

Table 8. Indicator-Level Emotional Regulation Analysis

Indicator	Pre Exp	Post Exp	Gain Exp	Pre Con	Post Con	Gain Con
Strategies to ER	17.91	22.16	+4.25	17.69	17.10	-0.59
Goal Directed Behavior	18.03	22.63	+4.60	17.83	17.24	-0.59
Control Impulse	17.84	22.31	+4.47	17.62	17.00	-0.62
Acceptance of ER	17.75	22.24	+4.49	17.72	16.83	-0.89
Total	71.53	87.34	+15.81	70.86	68.17	-2.69

Table 8 shows all four emotional regulation indicators improved in the experimental class. The greatest gain was in engaging in goal directed behavior (+4.60), followed by acceptance of emotional response (+4.49), control emotion response impulse (+4.47), and strategies to emotion regulation (+4.25). The control

class experienced slight decreases across all indicators, with the largest decline in acceptance of emotional response (-0.89).

Discussion

The results confirm that basic classical guidance services with a narrative approach significantly influence the optimization of emotional regulation of Generation Alpha students at SMP Negeri 8 Medan. From the perspective of Gross's (2015) emotion regulation theory, the significant improvement in strategies to emotion regulation demonstrates that re-authoring emotional narratives effectively develops a more diverse and adaptive repertoire of regulation strategies. The re-authoring activities in Session 4 assisted students in developing cognitive reappraisal one of the most effective antecedent-focused strategies.

The greatest gain in engaging in goal directed behavior (+4.60) is understood through Thompson's (2019) emphasis on the role of emotional regulation in facilitating goal-oriented functioning. The 'Personal Emotion Regulation Map' and 'Letter to Future Self' in Session 6 specifically linked emotional regulation abilities with long-term goals, creating strong intrinsic motivation. The externalization technique in Session 2 proved effective in improving impulse control (+4.47): consistent with White and Morgan (as cited in Corey, 2021), separating identity from emotional problems opens the psychological space needed for individuals to observe impulsive responses from a safer distance and choose more planned responses.

The very large effect size (Cohen's $d = 2.886$) is explained by the synergistic effect of the classical format enabling definitional ceremonies and peer social support—dimensions unavailable in individual counseling. Compared to Sari and Wibowo's (2023) $d = 1.24$ in individual narrative therapy, the larger effect here underscores the value of the collective classical format for Generation Alpha. The decline in acceptance of emotional response in the control class (-0.89) aligns with Garnefski and Kraaij's (2021) finding that without structured intervention, Gen Alpha students tend to develop negative metaemotions, affirming the urgency of explicitly targeting emotional acceptance in guidance interventions.

These findings are consistent with Rahmadani and Syahniar (2022), who found that classical guidance responsive to student characteristics significantly improved emotional regulation. For Generation Alpha, the narrative approach more flexible, creative, and strengths-based yields an even larger effect, confirming Winkel and Hastuti's (2019) premise that effectiveness depends heavily on developmental appropriateness. The high effectiveness is further explained by the compatibility between narrative approach elements (visual character drawing, emotional journaling, 'My New Story,' 'Letter to Future Self') and Gen Alpha's visual literacy, narrative thinking, and digital storytelling preferences (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2021).

For school counselors, the six-session progressive arc from emotional awareness and externalization, through unique outcomes identification and re-authoring, to definitional ceremonies and commitment—forms a coherent narrative structure that supports deep change. This is consistent with Prayitno and Amti's

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(2020) principle that effective guidance services must touch cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in an integrated manner.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that basic classical guidance services with a narrative approach significantly affect the optimization of emotional regulation of Generation Alpha students at SMP Negeri 8 Medan, demonstrated by $t = 7.842$, sig. (2-tailed) = $0.000 < 0.05$, and Cohen's $d = 2.886$ (very large effect). The experimental class mean score increased significantly from 71.53 (pretest) to 87.34 (posttest), with gain score +15.81 (N-Gain = 55.7%). All four indicators strategies to emotion regulation (+4.25), engaging in goal directed behavior (+4.60), control emotion response impulse (+4.47), and acceptance of emotional response (+4.49) showed significant improvements.

The narrative approach proved highly effective and relevant for Generation Alpha students due to its responsiveness to their visual literacy, narrative thinking, and digital storytelling preferences. The progressive six-session design formed a coherent narrative arc that supported deep, lasting change. School counselors are encouraged to integrate the narrative approach into classical guidance service planning, especially for emotional and social competency topics. School principals should allocate adequate time and resources for innovative guidance services.

Future researchers are recommended to: (a) investigate the narrative approach for other developmental domains (resilience, academic motivation, social skills); (b) involve larger, more representative samples; (c) integrate digital technology into narrative implementation aligned with Gen Alpha's ecosystem; and (d) conduct longitudinal studies to test the long-term sustainability of intervention effects. The authors express sincere gratitude to Prof. Dr. Budi Astuti, M.Si for supervision and guidance, to SMP Negeri 8 Medan's principal, guidance and counseling teachers, and students for their participation and support throughout the research process.

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