

## Effects of Group Counseling Sessions on Perceived Stress Among Undergraduate Students During COVID19 Pandemic

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**Abstract:** This study was aimed to assess the pre-test and post-test effects of group counseling sessions on perceived stress among undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was inspired by the fact of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on students' well-being during the pandemic. A true experiment design pretest posttest control group was employed in this study. Through purposive sampling, a total of 30 counseling students from a local university has been selected as representative of the sample population. Perceived-Stress Scale has been measured at pre and posttest. The results showed there are differences between the pre-test and post-test results after the experiment has been conducted by the researcher. This study provided valuable information about the appropriate intervention that can be used in order to cope with the group counseling session on perceived stress among undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, students should be introduced early to the university counselling services so that they can learn about the knowledge and techniques of coping with stress issues.

**Keywords:** Counseling Sessions, Perceived Stress, Undergraduate Students, COVID19

### BACKGROUND

The study aimed to assess the effects of group counseling sessions on perceived stress among undergraduate students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Group counseling is a type of counseling in which a small group of people meets on a regular basis to discuss, interact, and explore problems with one another and the group leader (What Is Group Counseling, 2021). Perceived stress refers to an individual's feelings or thoughts about how much stress they are experiencing at a given point in time or over a given time period (Perceived-Stress, 2021). Within behavioral medicine research, perceived stress measures are frequently used to investigate the relationships between stress and health (Phillips, 2013).

The outbreak has started in China in December 2019, which has speedily spread across the globe and caused massive disruptions to everyone's everyday life (Kecojevic et al., 2020) including the students' life. Hence, every country taken to public health measures has been implemented to control the disease's transmission of the coronavirus (WHO, 2020). However, the steps taken to overcome this spread have affected the function of global higher education, causing them to use online learning platforms and putting pressure on students. In this situation, some students might have difficulties with access to computers and the internet connection at home (Sahu, 2019; Lederman, 2020) causing stress and possibly affecting the student's mental health.

This incident led Malaysia to record the highest increase in the COVID-19 infectious disease in Asia within a week. Hence, steps to reduce the pandemic were instantaneously taken by the Malaysian government where the nationwide "Movement Control Order" was declared on 18