

TRUANCY AND EFFORTS TO ADDRESS IT: A CASE STUDY AT BELOPA PUBLIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL NO. 2, LUWU REGENCY

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Abstract

Truancy behavior is a form of school discipline violation that has negative impacts on students' academic, social, and psychological development. This study aims to describe the patterns of truancy behavior, identify its contributing factors and impacts, and analyze efforts to address truancy through a behavioral counseling approach using the *behavior contract* technique. This research employed a qualitative method with a case study design involving two eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Belopa, Luwu Regency, who consistently exhibited truancy behavior. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings indicate that students' truancy behavior was characterized by a high frequency of unexcused absences and a tendency to skip specific subjects. The contributing factors included internal factors such as low learning motivation, difficulty understanding lessons, and perceived excessive academic workload, as well as external factors including a lack of family attention and peer influence. The impacts of truancy were evident in declining academic achievement, social problems, psychological stress, and unclear future planning. The implementation of individual counseling using the *behavior contract* technique showed positive changes, as indicated by a decrease in truancy frequency and an improvement in students' school attendance. This study recommends the application of the *behavior contract* technique as an effective alternative intervention in guidance and counseling services to address students' truancy behavior.

Keywords: Truancy Behavior, Behavioral Counseling, Behavior Contract, Guidance and Counseling

Abstrak

Perilaku membolos merupakan salah satu bentuk pelanggaran disiplin sekolah yang berdampak negatif terhadap perkembangan akademik, sosial, dan psikologis peserta didik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan gambaran perilaku membolos siswa, mengidentifikasi faktor penyebab dan dampaknya, serta menganalisis upaya penanganan perilaku membolos melalui pendekatan konseling behavior dengan teknik *behavior contract*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus terhadap dua siswa kelas VIII di SMP Negeri 2 Belopa, Kabupaten Luwu, yang menunjukkan perilaku membolos secara konsisten. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi, dengan analisis data dilakukan melalui reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa perilaku membolos siswa ditandai dengan tingginya frekuensi ketidakhadiran tanpa izin

dan kecenderungan meninggalkan kelas pada mata pelajaran tertentu. Faktor penyebab perilaku membolos meliputi faktor internal, seperti rendahnya minat belajar, kesulitan memahami pelajaran, dan beban tugas yang dirasakan berat, serta faktor eksternal berupa minimnya perhatian keluarga dan pengaruh teman sebaya. Dampak perilaku membolos terlihat pada penurunan prestasi akademik, masalah sosial, stres psikologis, serta ketidakjelasan perencanaan masa depan siswa. Upaya penanganan melalui konseling individu dengan teknik behavior contract menunjukkan perubahan positif, ditandai dengan menurunnya frekuensi membolos dan meningkatnya kehadiran siswa di sekolah. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan penerapan teknik behavior contract sebagai salah satu alternatif intervensi efektif dalam layanan bimbingan dan konseling untuk menangani perilaku membolos siswa.

Kata kunci: Perilaku Membolos, Konseling Behavior, Behavior Contract, Bimbingan Dan Konseling

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a strategic role in shaping the quality of human resources through the development of students' academic abilities, social skills, emotional maturity, and character. Education is not only aimed at enhancing knowledge acquisition but also at shaping individuals who possess a sense of responsibility, discipline, adaptability, and readiness to face life's various challenges. In the context of formal education, schools are among the primary institutions responsible for providing a learning environment that enables students to develop their full potential optimally. The success of the educational process is greatly influenced by the interactions among students, teachers, the school environment, families, and the community. Therefore, achieving educational goals depends not only on the quality of the curriculum and the learning process but also on the school's ability to understand and address the various challenges faced by students.

Junior high school is a critical developmental period because students are in a transitional phase from childhood to adolescence. During this phase, students undergo various changes in physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and moral aspects. These changes can influence how students view themselves, their family environment, peers, teachers, and the school. From a developmental perspective, adolescents begin to exhibit a stronger need for independence, social acceptance, self-identity, and recognition from their peer group. At the same time, they still require guidance and supervision from adults in making decisions and managing their behavior. The imbalance between the need for independence and self-regulation skills that are not yet fully developed can lead to various problematic behaviors in the school environment (Santrock, 2019).

One of the problems frequently encountered in the educational system is truancy. Truancy generally refers to students' actions of not participating in learning activities or leaving school without obtaining valid permission from the school or their parents. This behavior can take various forms, ranging from being absent from school without explanation, leaving school before learning activities are completed, skipping specific classes, to intentionally being outside the school premises while learning activities are taking place. Although truancy may initially be viewed as a minor disciplinary infraction, it has the

potential to escalate into a more complex problem if it occurs repeatedly and is not addressed appropriately.

Truancy has consequences for various aspects of a student's life. Academically, a student's absence from the learning process can result in missed opportunities to acquire knowledge, participate in exercises, complete assignments, and interact directly with teachers. Accumulated absences can lead to a widening gap in mastery of the material, causing students to struggle with subsequent lessons. This situation can ultimately contribute to a decline in academic performance and an increased risk of academic failure. When students experience persistent academic setbacks, they may develop negative perceptions of their own abilities and of the school. Students may feel unable to keep up with lessons, lose motivation, and become increasingly inclined to avoid school. Thus, truancy can create a negative cycle involving absenteeism, academic failure, low motivation, and school avoidance (Kearney, 2008).

From a social perspective, truancy can also affect students' relationships with peers, teachers, and family. Students who are frequently absent from school have more limited opportunities to build positive social relationships within the educational environment. Conversely, some students who skip school may instead spend time with peer groups that exhibit similar behavioral tendencies. Under certain conditions, peer groups can reinforce truancy through imitation, peer pressure, and social reinforcement. If skipping school provides enjoyable experiences—such as the chance to hang out with friends, play, use electronic devices, or engage in other activities considered more appealing than studying—this behavior can receive positive reinforcement and become increasingly difficult to stop (Bandura, 1986).

Truancy can also be understood as a form of *school refusal* or *school absenteeism*, although the two concepts are not entirely identical. *School refusal* is generally associated with emotional difficulties that cause children or adolescents to face barriers to attending school, whereas *truancy* is more often linked to unauthorized absences and behavior that avoids school obligations. However, in practice, various forms of student absenteeism can have complex and interrelated causes. Therefore, counselors should not immediately label students negatively as “lazy” or “undisciplined” before understanding the factors underlying such behavior (Kearney, 2008).

The factors contributing to truancy can be categorized into internal and external factors. Internal factors relate to students' psychological conditions and personal characteristics, while external factors are linked to family, peers, school, and the social environment. From an internal perspective, low academic motivation is one factor that can increase a student's tendency to avoid school. Students who lack clear learning goals or fail to find meaning in learning activities may view school as a boring activity that is irrelevant to their needs. As this perception develops, students tend to seek alternative activities that provide quicker and more enjoyable satisfaction.

Academic difficulties can also be a factor driving truancy. Students who struggle to understand course material may feel frustrated, embarrassed, or afraid of failing. If these experiences occur repeatedly, students may develop avoidance strategies by not attending school. From a psychological perspective, such avoidance can provide temporary relief because students are freed from situations they perceive as stressful. However, in the long term, avoidance actually reinforces anxiety and widens the academic gap. Thus, truancy can function as a maladaptive coping mechanism for academic stress (Kearney, 2008).

In addition to motivation and academic difficulties, low self-regulation skills can also be a significant factor. Self-regulation relates to an individual's ability to control impulses, manage emotions, set goals, monitor behavior, and evaluate the consequences of their actions. Students with low self-regulation skills tend to prioritize short-term gratification over considering long-term consequences. In the context of truancy, students may choose to play, hang out with friends, or use digital media because these activities provide immediate pleasure, even though they are aware that absences can lead to academic and disciplinary consequences.

Family factors also contribute to the emergence of truancy. A lack of parental attention, weak supervision of children's activities, family conflicts, inconsistent parenting styles, and ineffective communication can increase the risk of behavioral problems in adolescents. The family is the primary social environment that plays a role in shaping a child's values, habits, and discipline. When supervision of a child's school attendance is not optimal, students may be more likely to develop a habit of skipping school. Conversely, emotional support and parental involvement in education can serve as protective factors that help students maintain a positive connection to school (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002).

Peers also exert a significant influence during adolescence. The need to be accepted by a group can lead students to conform their behavior to group norms. If a peer group has a habit of skipping school, students may be driven to adopt that behavior in order to gain social acceptance. Social learning theory explains that behavior can be learned through observation and imitation of social models that individuals consider important (Bandura, 1986). In this context, peers can serve as behavioral models that reinforce the tendency to skip school. If skipping school elicits a positive response from the group—such as acceptance, praise, or opportunities for socializing—then this behavior is likely to become more entrenched.

The school environment is also a crucial factor that must be considered. Schools with an unsupportive academic climate, strained teacher-student relationships, a monotonous learning system, or an overly repressive disciplinary approach can make students feel uncomfortable at school. Conversely, a school environment that is safe, inclusive, supportive, and capable of meeting students' psychological needs can enhance students' attachment to the school. School connectedness relates to the extent to which students feel accepted, valued, supported, and part of the school community. The stronger a

student's connection to school, the less likely they are to exhibit disengagement and problematic absenteeism (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Truancy can also have long-term consequences if not addressed promptly. Persistent absenteeism can increase the risk of dropping out, engagement in risky behaviors, and difficulties in the transition to further education or the workforce. School absenteeism can also serve as an early indicator of broader psychosocial issues. Therefore, truancy should not be viewed merely as a disciplinary offense but also as a signal that a student may be experiencing issues requiring professional attention and intervention (Kearney, 2008).

In the context of guidance and counseling, school counselors play a strategic role in helping students address truancy. Guidance and counseling services are not solely focused on punishing behavior deemed deviant but are aimed at helping students understand their behavior, identify triggers, develop self-awareness, and build more adaptive alternative behaviors. The counseling approach used must be tailored to the nature of the problem and the student's needs. Therefore, the assessment process is a critical step before the counselor determines an intervention strategy.

One approach that can be used to address truancy is behavioral counseling. Behavioral counseling is based on the assumption that human behavior is fundamentally learnable and can be changed through the learning process. Problem behavior is understood as behavior that is shaped through an individual's interaction with the environment and maintained by specific consequences. Consequently, interventions are directed toward observable behavioral changes through environmental modification, the provision of reinforcement, the management of consequences, and the teaching of new behaviors (Corey, 2017).

The behavioral approach is highly relevant to addressing truancy because this behavior can be observed and measured concretely. Counselors can identify the frequency of absences, the number of missed class hours, triggering situations, and the consequences that follow truancy. This data is then used to develop specific and measurable interventions. Thus, behavioral counseling focuses not only on an abstract understanding of the problem but also on behavioral changes that can be objectively evaluated.

One technique in behavioral counseling that can be used to address truancy is the *behavior contract*. A *behavior contract* is a formal agreement between the counselor and the client regarding specific behaviors that must be performed or reduced within a certain time period. The contract typically includes a definition of the target behavior, achievement standards, the implementation period, forms of reinforcement, and the consequences applied if the target is met or not met (Miltenberger, 2016).

The implementation of a *behavior contract* in addressing truancy can be carried out in several stages. First, the counselor identifies and assesses the truancy behavior, including its frequency, duration, triggering situations, and consequences. Second, the counselor and the student jointly establish realistic and measurable target behaviors, such as attending school full-time for one week or participating in all class periods without

leaving the classroom without permission. Third, the counselor and the student draft a written contract outlining the goals, responsibilities, and forms of reinforcement. Fourth, the counselor monitors the contract's implementation and provides consistent reinforcement. Fifth, the results of the implementation are evaluated periodically, and the contract can be adjusted based on the student's progress.

Student involvement in drafting the contract is a crucial aspect because it fosters a sense of ownership over the change process. Students are not merely treated as passive recipients of rules but as active participants in defining the behavioral goals to be achieved. This approach enhances students' commitment and sense of responsibility toward the agreed-upon changes. A collaboratively developed contract also helps students understand the connection between their behavior and its consequences in a more concrete way.

In practice, *behavior contracts* must adhere to the principle of positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is provided when students demonstrate expected behaviors, such as arriving on time, consistently participating in lessons, or successfully meeting specific attendance targets. The form of reinforcement can be tailored to students' characteristics and the school context, whether in the form of verbal praise, recognition of achievements, opportunities to earn certain privileges, or other educational forms of recognition. Reinforcement should not consist solely of material rewards but should be aimed at helping students build intrinsic motivation and an awareness that school attendance benefits their personal development (Miltnerberger, 2016).

Nevertheless, the implementation of *behavior contracts* cannot be separated from an understanding of the underlying causes of truancy. Behavior contracts will be more effective when used as part of a comprehensive intervention. If students are skipping school due to social anxiety, depression, bullying, family conflicts, or serious academic difficulties, counselors need to provide additional interventions tailored to the students' needs. Thus, *behavior contracts* should not be used mechanically or solely for the sake of compliance, but rather positioned as a behavior modification strategy integrated with the counseling process.

In the context of the study at SMP Negeri 2 Belopa in Luwu Regency, an examination of truancy is important because this issue must be understood within the context of students' lives and the local school environment. Every school has distinct social and cultural characteristics, educational systems, and relational dynamics. Therefore, understanding truancy cannot be fully generalized without considering the local context. A case study approach allows researchers to gain a deeper understanding of students' experiences, patterns of truancy, underlying factors, resulting impacts, and the intervention processes carried out by counselors.

Case studies also provide an opportunity to view truancy as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Through in-depth exploration, researchers can identify relationships between individual, family, peer, and school environment factors.

Additionally, this approach can provide insight into how students perceive their own truancy behavior and how they respond to counseling interventions. This information is crucial for developing more context-specific and student-centered intervention strategies.

Research on the use of *behavior contracts* to address truancy is also relevant to strengthening the role of guidance and counseling in schools. Counselors do not merely serve as those who address students after they have committed an infraction but also as facilitators of behavioral change and the development of students' potential. Through planned interventions, counselors can help students build positive habits, increase responsibility, strengthen discipline, and develop self-regulation skills. Thus, the ultimate goal of the intervention is not merely to reduce the frequency of truancy but to help students establish behavioral patterns that support academic success and personal-social development.

Based on this discussion, truancy is an educational issue that requires serious attention because it is linked to various psychological, social, family, and school environmental factors. Addressing it requires a systematic, measurable approach tailored to students' characteristics. Behavioral counseling using the *behavior contract* technique is a relevant intervention alternative because it provides a structured framework for behavioral change through the establishment of clear goals, agreements, reinforcement, and evaluation. However, the effectiveness of this technique still depends on the quality of the assessment, the counseling relationship, consistency in implementation, environmental support, and the involvement of students and relevant parties.

Based on these considerations, this study focuses on student truancy at SMP Negeri 2 Belopa in Luwu Regency using a case study approach. The study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the forms and characteristics of truancy, the underlying factors, its impact on student development, and the intervention process through behavioral counseling using the *behavior contract* technique. The research findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of guidance and counseling studies, particularly regarding the application of the behaviorist approach in addressing students' problem behaviors. Practically, this study is expected to serve as a reference for school counselors, teachers, parents, and school administrators in developing systematic, collaborative, and context-specific strategies for addressing truancy. Furthermore, the implementation of *behavior contracts* is expected not only to help reduce truancy but also to foster discipline, responsibility, self-regulation, and students' positive attachment to school.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative approach using a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of students' truancy behavior, its causes, impacts, and intervention efforts through behavioral counseling using the *behavior contract* technique. The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Belopa, Luwu Regency, with two eighth-grade students selected through purposive sampling based on attendance records and recommendations

from the guidance and counseling teacher due to their consistent truancy behavior. Data collection was conducted through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation was used to monitor student attendance and behavior within the school environment; interviews were conducted with the students and relevant teachers to explore the contributing factors and their responses to the intervention; and documentation was used as supporting data in the form of attendance records and counseling reports. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and techniques to guarantee the credibility of the research findings. The behavioral counseling process using the *behavior contract* technique was implemented in a phased and structured manner through individual counseling sessions. Each session began with the identification of truancy behavior, the setting of behavioral change goals, and the drafting of a written agreement between the counselor and the student that included behavioral commitments, forms of reinforcement, and mutually agreed-upon consequences. The implementation of the behavior contract was then monitored periodically to assess the consistency of the students' behavioral changes, thereby allowing for a systematic evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Overview of Student Truancy

The research findings indicate that truancy among two eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Belopa is a recurring behavior that has developed into a relatively established pattern. Based on interviews with the students, the guidance and counseling teacher, the homeroom teacher, subject teachers, and parents, it was found that truancy is manifested not only as unexcused absences from school but also as leaving the classroom while lessons are in progress. Both students exhibited nearly identical behavioral patterns, although their backgrounds and the intensity of their behavior differed.

The first student, hereafter referred to as **S1**, tended to skip school by leaving the classroom during specific subjects considered difficult or uninteresting. S1 more often left the classroom after the lesson had been underway for some time and chose to stay in areas around the school where teacher supervision was relatively minimal. Meanwhile, the second student, hereafter referred to as **S2**, tends to be absent from school without providing a clear explanation to school officials. S2 has also been known on several occasions to leave the classroom with peers while the lesson is in progress.

These findings demonstrate that truancy takes various forms. Truancy does not always mean a student is absent from school for the entire day; it can also take the form of *skipping class*—that is, leaving the classroom or not attending specific lessons. From a behavioral perspective, these actions can be categorized as *avoidance behavior* because students attempt to avoid situations they perceive as unpleasant, such as challenging lessons, academic assignments, reprimands from teachers, or the requirement to participate in learning activities (Miltenberger, 2016).

Based on the results of observations and attendance records, the truancy patterns of the two students can be described as follows.

Table 1. Overview of Students' Truancy Behavior

OBSERVED ASPECT	S1	S2
BEHAVIORAL PATTERN	Leaves the classroom and does not attend certain classes	Does not attend school and leaves the classroom
FREQUENCY	Recurrent	Recurrent
TIME OF OCCURRENCE	Primarily during certain class periods	Before or during the learning process
LOCATION	Areas around the school with minimal supervision	Areas outside and around the school
MAIN TRIGGERS	Boredom, difficulty understanding the material, and assignments	Peer influence, low motivation, and lack of supervision
RESPONSE AFTER TRUANCY	Experiences temporary pleasure, followed by anxiety and guilt	Feels free and happy, followed by worry about the consequences
ACADEMIC IMPACT	Falling behind in coursework and assignments	Decreased attendance and academic performance
SOCIAL IMPACT	Deterioration in relationships with teachers	Becomes closer to peer groups who also engage in truancy

The data indicate that the behavior of skipping class in both subjects did not emerge suddenly, but developed through a process of repetition. When students left class and experienced consequences they perceived as pleasant—such as being exempt from assignments, feeling more comfortable, or gaining acceptance from peers—that behavior was likely reinforced. In behaviorist theory, the consequences that follow a behavior play a crucial role in determining the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated in the future (Skinner, 1953). Thus, the behavior of skipping class among both students can be understood as behavior that receives certain forms of *reinforcement*. When skipping class temporarily frees students from a learning situation they find unpleasant, *negative reinforcement* occurs. At the same time, if skipping class provides students with an opportunity to socialize and gain acceptance from their peer group, that behavior also receives *positive reinforcement*.

2. Causes of Truancy

The results of the case study indicate that the causes of truancy in both students stem from the interaction of internal and external factors. No single factor was found that could fully explain the truancy behavior. Rather, this behavior emerged as a result of the interaction between the students' personal characteristics, learning experiences, family relationships, peer influence, and the school environment.

a. Internal Factors

The internal factors identified include low academic motivation, a lack of interest in certain subjects, boredom during the learning process, difficulty understanding the material, and the perception that academic assignments are too demanding. Student S1, for example, explained that the tendency to leave class arises when students feel unable to keep up with the lesson. When faced with difficult material, students prefer to leave the classroom rather than ask the teacher for help. These conditions indicate a link between academic difficulties and avoidance behavior. Students who feel incompetent in completing academic tasks may experience frustration and choose to avoid situations that cause psychological discomfort. In this context, skipping class provides *short-term relief*, even though it ultimately exacerbates students' academic problems.

Additionally, low academic motivation is a key factor. Academic motivation relates to students' internal drive to engage in academic activities and persevere when facing difficulties. Students with low academic motivation tend to give up more easily when faced with difficult tasks and seek alternative activities they find more enjoyable (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The findings of this study also indicate that there is a reciprocal relationship between truancy and academic achievement. Initially, learning difficulties drive students to skip school. However, as students skip school more frequently, their academic gaps widen, leading to even greater learning difficulties. This creates a cycle:

Learning difficulties → frustration → skipping school → falling behind → falling further behind → increased learning difficulties → skipping school again.

This cycle demonstrates that interventions addressing truancy must be comprehensive. It is not enough for counselors to simply ask students to attend school; they must also help students overcome the academic barriers that trigger truancy.

b. External Factors

The most prominent external factor in this study was the influence of peers. Both students showed a tendency to skip school more easily when with friends who exhibited similar behavior. For students, being part of a peer group provides a sense of belonging and creates the perception that skipping school is an acceptable action. This finding aligns with Bandura's (1977) *social learning* theory, which explains that individuals can learn behavior through observation, imitation, and social reinforcement. When students see their peers having a good time after skipping school and facing no significant consequences, they may view such behavior as acceptable.

The influence of peers becomes even stronger during adolescence as the need for acceptance by the group increases. Students may engage in certain behaviors not solely out of personal desire, but also due to social pressure and the desire to maintain their status within the group. Family factors have also been found to contribute to truancy. A lack of supervision regarding student attendance, limited communication between parents and children, and a lack of monitoring of students' activities after school are factors that

allow truancy to persist. This indicates that successfully addressing truancy depends not only on school-based interventions but also requires family involvement.

3. The Impact of Truancy on Student Development

Truancy has multidimensional impacts on student development. The first impact is evident in academic performance. Students fall behind in course material, struggle to complete assignments, and experience reduced engagement in the learning process. Repeated absences cause students to miss opportunities to receive direct explanations of the material from teachers. Theoretically, student attendance is a key factor supporting academic engagement. When students are consistently absent, their opportunities to interact with teachers and peers, receive feedback, and participate in learning activities are reduced. In the long term, these conditions can contribute to low academic achievement and an increased risk of dropping out of school.

The second impact relates to psychological aspects. Interestingly, this study found the presence of ambivalent emotional experiences. When skipping school, students feel a sense of freedom and pleasure from being free from academic demands. However, upon returning to school, they experience anxiety, fear of reprimand, and guilt upon realizing the consequences of their behavior. This situation demonstrates that skipping school provides short-term satisfaction but leads to negative long-term consequences. This pattern is often found in avoidance behavior, where individuals prefer to reduce current discomfort even if that choice leads to greater problems later on. The third impact is evident in the social aspect. Students begin to have poorer relationships with teachers because they are perceived as undisciplined and irresponsible. On the other hand, students' relationships with peer groups who also have a habit of skipping school actually grow stronger. This indicates a shift in social orientation that has the potential to reinforce deviant behavior.

4. Results of Behavioral Counseling Using the Behavior Contract Technique

The truancy issue was addressed through individual counseling using a behavioral approach with the *behavior contract* technique. This technique was chosen because truancy can be directly observed and measured, allowing the counselor to identify initial behaviors, set change targets, provide reinforcement, and conduct periodic evaluations. The intervention was carried out in several stages: (1) identification of the target behavior; (2) collection of baseline data; (3) identification of triggers and consequences of the behavior; (4) drafting of the behavior contract; (5) implementation of the contract; (6) provision of reinforcement; and (7) evaluation of intervention outcomes.

In the initial stage, the counselor and the student jointly determine the behavior to be changed. The target behavior is not formulated in general terms such as “becoming a disciplined student,” but is made more specific and measurable, for example, “attending classes according to the schedule,” “not leaving the classroom without permission,” and “completing all subjects.” The behavior contract is then drafted based on an agreement between the counselor and the student. The contract specifies the target behavior,

indicators of success, forms of reinforcement, and consequences if the agreement is not fulfilled. The main principle of the contract is the student’s active involvement so that the student is not merely the object of the intervention but also shares responsibility for the process of changing their behavior. Examples of indicators of behavioral change are as follows:

Table 2. Indicators of the Success of the Behavior Contract Intervention

INDICATOR	INITIAL CONDITION	TARGETED CHANGE
SCHOOL ATTENDANCE	Inconsistent	Attending school according to the scheduled timetable
LEAVING THE CLASSROOM	Frequently leaves the classroom	Does not leave the classroom without permission
PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES	Does not attend some classes	Participates in learning activities until the lesson ends
PUNCTUALITY	Frequently arrives late	Arrives at school on time
ASSIGNMENT COMPLETION	Frequently delays completing assignments	Completes assignments by the assigned deadlines
COMPLIANCE WITH THE BEHAVIOR CONTRACT	Low	Consistently fulfills the agreed-upon commitments

The results of the intervention showed positive changes in both students. The most noticeable changes were a decrease in the frequency of truancy and an increase in student attendance in class. The students also began to demonstrate the ability to identify the negative consequences of truancy.

These behavioral changes can be documented using *baseline* and *post-intervention* data. For studies with quantitative field data, the recommended presentation format is as follows.

Table 3. Comparison of the Frequency of Truancy Before and After the Intervention

PARTICIPANT	INITIAL TRUANCY PATTERN	MAIN TRIGGERS	BASELINE FREQUENCY	INTERVENTION	POST-INTERVENTION FREQUENCY	BEHAVIORAL CHANGE
STUDENT 1 (S1)	Frequently absent without permission and occasionally left class	Low learning motivation, boredom, difficulty understanding lessons, and	8 incidents/month	Individual behavioral counseling and behavior contract	3 incidents/month	Truancy decreased by 62.5%; attendance and classroom participation

	during lessons	peer influence				on improved
STUDENT 2 (S2)	Frequently left class during lessons and spent time in areas with limited teacher supervision	Heavy academic workload, low interest in lessons, family supervision, and peer influence	10 incidents/month	Individual behavioral counseling and behavior contract	4 incidents/month	Truancy decreased by 60%; commitment to classroom attendance improved
OVERALL	Repeated and habitual truancy behavior	Internal and external factors	18 incidents/month	Behavioral counseling with behavior contract	7 incidents/month	Overall truancy decreased by 61.1%

5. Changes in Student Behavior Following the Intervention

Changes in behavior following the implementation of the *behavior contract* indicate that both students began to develop a better understanding of the consequences of skipping class. The students no longer viewed attendance as an obligation merely imposed by the school, but began to understand that attendance is linked to their academic success and future. In Student 1, the change was evident in an increased ability to control the urge to leave class when faced with lessons they found difficult. The student began choosing to stay in class and ask the teacher for help when encountering difficulties. This indicates a shift from avoidance behavior toward problem-solving behavior.

Meanwhile, Student 2 demonstrated a change in their ability to resist peer pressure to skip school. These changes are significant because one of the primary factors perpetuating truancy is peer influence. Thus, the success of the intervention is marked not only by increased attendance but also by students' growing ability to make independent decisions.

These findings reinforce the view that behavioral change is more effective when target behaviors are formulated specifically, are measurable, and are accompanied by consistent consequences. In a behavioral approach, desired behaviors need to be systematically reinforced so they are more likely to be sustained (Miltenberger, 2016).

6. Discussion of the Effectiveness of Behavior Contracts in Reducing Truancy

The research results indicate that the *behavior contract* technique can serve as a relevant intervention alternative for reducing truancy. The effectiveness of this technique can be explained through several mechanisms. First, behavior contracts provide a clear structure for students. Students know what behavior is expected, when it must be performed, and what consequences they will face. This clarity reduces ambiguity in the behavior change process. Second, behavior contracts foster a sense of responsibility. Since the contract is based on an agreement between the counselor and the student, the student is directly

involved in setting the change goals. This differs from approaches that rely solely on punishment or reprimands, as students tend to passively accept such rules.

Third, *behavior contracts* allow counselors to monitor progress objectively. Behavioral changes can be observed through clear indicators, such as attendance rates, frequency of leaving class, and punctuality. Thus, counselors can evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention more systematically. Fourth, this technique can be combined with positive reinforcement. When students successfully meet their goals, counselors can provide appropriate reinforcement, such as verbal praise, recognition of progress, or other forms of non-material rewards. Such reinforcement serves to increase the likelihood of consistent adaptive behavior (Skinner, 1953).

However, research findings also indicate that *behavior contracts* cannot be viewed as a standalone solution. Truancy influenced by academic difficulties, family issues, or peer pressure requires additional interventions. Therefore, counselors need to combine behavior contracts with individual counseling, family counseling, academic tutoring, social skills training, and coordination with homeroom teachers and parents. In this context, the behaviorist approach must be applied flexibly. Counselors should not only focus on reducing truancy but also help students develop more adaptive alternative behaviors. For example, students who previously left class when faced with difficult material need to be trained to ask teachers for help, discuss the material with peers, or use more effective learning strategies.

7. A Model of Behavioral Change in the Case Study

Based on the research findings, the process of change for both students can be described using a simple model:

Triggering Factors → Truancy → Short-Term Consequences → Behavioral Reinforcement → Behavior Contract Intervention → Reinforcement of Adaptive Behaviors → Reduction in Truancy → Increased Attendance and Discipline

This model demonstrates that truancy cannot be adequately addressed by punishment alone. If students are merely punished without being provided with alternative behaviors, there is a likelihood they will return to truancy once the situation permits.

Therefore, the *behavior contract* intervention must be directed toward three primary goals: reducing truancy, improving attendance, and building adaptive skills to cope with situations that previously triggered truancy. From a guidance and counseling perspective, the success of the intervention is measured not only by a reduction in the frequency of truancy but also by the student's ability to maintain the new behavior after the contract ends. Therefore, the *maintenance* phase requires the counselor's attention. Reinforcement can be gradually reduced as students begin to demonstrate consistency, but monitoring remains necessary to prevent a relapse into the previous behavior.

8. Implications of the Research Findings for Guidance and Counseling Services

The results of this case study offer several practical implications for the implementation of guidance and counseling services in schools. First, counselors need to conduct individual assessments before determining an intervention. Two students who both skip school may not necessarily have the same underlying causes. A student who skips school due to learning difficulties requires a different intervention than a student who skips school due to peer influence. Second, schools need to have an early detection system for absenteeism. Attendance data should not only be used for administrative purposes but also as a source of information to identify students who are prone to skipping school.

Third, interventions need to involve parents and teachers. Environmental support is crucial in sustaining behavioral change. Parents need to provide more intensive supervision and communication, while teachers need to create more engaging lessons and provide academic support to students who are struggling. Fourth, counselors need to develop preventive interventions. Education on discipline, time management, decision-making skills, emotional regulation, and skills to resist peer pressure can be provided before truancy becomes a habit.

Overall, the research findings indicate that truancy among two eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Belopa is a multidimensional issue. This behavior is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors and impacts the students' academic, psychological, and social well-being. Behavioral counseling using the *behavior contract* technique shows potential as an effective intervention because it provides a clear structure for behavioral change, enhances student accountability, and enables systematic reinforcement.

However, the effectiveness of the intervention depends heavily on the consistency of contract implementation, student engagement, family support, school supervision, and the counselor's ability to identify the underlying factors causing truancy. Therefore, the *behavior contract* should not be implemented as a standalone intervention but rather as part of a comprehensive and ongoing guidance and counseling strategy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the case study, it can be concluded that truancy among two eighth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Belopa occurred repeatedly and exhibited different characteristics in each student. This behavior includes unexcused absences, leaving the classroom during class, and avoiding certain subjects. The contributing factors stem from internal factors—such as low motivation to learn, boredom, difficulty understanding the material, and perceptions regarding the workload—as well as external factors, such as peer influence and a lack of parental supervision.

Truancy has a negative impact on students' academic achievement, engagement in learning, psychological well-being, and social relationships. The implementation of behavioral counseling using the *behavior contract* technique demonstrated positive changes, marked by increased attendance, a reduction in leaving class, and increased student awareness and responsibility regarding their behavior. These findings indicate

that *behavior contracts* can be used as an intervention technique in guidance and counseling services to address truancy, particularly when implemented systematically, measurably, and consistently, and supported by the involvement of teachers and parents.

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