

APPLICATION OF SYSTEMATIC DESENSITIZATION TECHNIQUES TO OVERCOME ACADEMIC ANXIETY IN BLIND "A" CLIENTS AT SLB-A RPCN PALEMBANG

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Abstract

This research aims to determine the description of academic anxiety in client "A" at SLB-A PRPCN Palembang before systematic desensitization techniques are given. This research method uses a qualitative approach and case study research methods. Data collection uses interview, observation and documentation techniques. The research subject consisted of one person, namely client "A" who was blind. The results of this research show that before the application of this systematic desensitization technique, client "A's" academic anxiety picture was in the form of concerns about his own abilities in mobility orientation, having a fear of failing in mobility orientation, having negative thoughts about mobility orientation, having difficulty taking decision in mobility orientation, feeling excessive heart rate when going to mobility orientation, feeling sweat on the palms during mobility orientation, and experiencing difficulty moving in a new environment during mobility orientation. Furthermore, after implementing this systematic desensitization technique, client "A" began to experience changes, namely the client began to worry less about himself, began to no longer be afraid that he would fail in mobility orientation, was able to control negative thoughts about mobility orientation, and began to be able to make decisions. itself in mobility orientation, reduced heart rate. the sweat on the palms has begun to decrease and I have started to dare to move in new environments during mobility orientation. This shows that the application of this systematic desensitization technique was successful in overcoming academic anxiety in client "A" who was blind at SLB-A PRPCN Palembang.

Keywords: Systematic desensitization technique, Academic anxiety, Blind

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui gambaran kecemasan akademik pada klien "A" di SLB-A PRPCN Palembang sebelum diberikannya teknik desensitisasi sistematis. Metode penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dan metode penelitian studi kasus. Pengumpulan data menggunakan teknik wawancara, observasi dan dokumentasi. Subjek penelitian berjumlah satu orang yaitu klien "A" yang dialami oleh tunanetra. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa sebelum penerapan teknik desensitisasi sistematis ini, gambaran kecemasan akademik klien "A" berupa khawatir dengan kemampuannya sendiri dalam orientasi mobilitas, mempunyai rasa takut akan gagal dalam orientasi mobilitas, memiliki pemikiran yang negatif tentang orientasi mobilitas, mengalami kesulitan untuk mengambil keputusan dalam orientasi mobilitas, merasakan denyut jantung yang berlebihan ketika akan orientasi mobilitas, merasakan keringat

pada telapak tangan saat orientasi mobilitas, dan mengalami kesulitan untuk bergerak dilingkungan yang baru saat orientasi mobilitas. Selanjutnya setelah penerapan teknik desensitisasi sistematis ini klien "A" mulai mengalami perubahan, yaitu klien sudah mulai tidak terlalu khawatir dengan dirinya sendiri, sudah mulai tidak takut lagi akan gagal dalam orientasi mobilitas, sudah dapat mengontrol pikiran negatif tentang orientasi mobilitas, mulai dapat mengambil keputusan sendiri dalam orientasi mobilitas, denyut jantung yang berkurang, keringat pada telapak tangan mulai berkurang dan sudah mulai berani bergerak dilingkungan yang baru saat orientasi mobilitas. Hal tersebut menunjukkan bahwa penerapan teknik desensitisasi sistematis ini berhasil dalam mengatasi kecemasan akademik pada klien "A" penyandang tunanetra di SLB-A PRPCN Palembang.

Kata Kunci: Teknik desensitisasi sistematis, Kecemasan akademik, Tunanetra

INTRODUCTION

The public's understanding of the context and situation of children with special needs (ABK) often has a negative connotation. There is an understanding that views crew members as the same as infectious diseases, that if they are close to crew members, they will be infected with these special needs. Some people view ABK as a nuisance (Evanjeli, 2018). According to Wijayanto, due to disability limitations, people still view and consider it a disgrace to families or people who must be pitied. So that their treatment is different from children in general (Sri Maullasari, 2021). Children with special needs are children who grow and develop with differences from children in general (Khairun Nisa et al., 2018). The categories of children with special needs are: Visually impaired, speechless, disabled, and deaf. In this case, the author takes the problem that occurs to the visually impaired at SLB A PRPCN Palembang.

Blindness or blindness is a term used for the condition of individuals who experience abnormalities or impaired visual function. Based on the degree/degree of disorder, individuals who experience vision disorders are grouped into two groups, namely, individuals who are blind. and individuals who still have residual vision (Low Vision) (Mambela, 2018). While some people look at visually impaired children, many people consider that blind children have privileges and advantages over their shortcomings. As in Sutjihati Somantri's theory that from the perspective of vigilance, the blind have positive advantages such as sensitivity to sound, touch, memory, skills in playing musical instruments, and a high connection to moral and religious values. With their advantages, visually impaired children often face high anxiety when adapting to the environment or in learning because of their limitations in their vision, especially in the problem of academic anxiety.

Academic anxiety in students with visual impairments can arise in response to situations that make students anxious and afraid when faced with feared objects. Academic anxiety is a form of encouragement in the form of thoughts and feelings that contain worries, worries and fears that result in disruption of thinking patterns and physical responses and behaviors. As the results of research from Mbugua & K'Okul show that a person with visual impairment experiences higher anxiety than someone alert (Sri Maullasari, 2021). According to Bandura, academic anxiety is anxiety based on lack of confidence in one's

ability to overcome or complete academic tasks (Novitria & Khoirunnisa, 2020). With this, the researcher found that the problem of academic anxiety experienced by client "A" is that they often experience anxiety in the academic field, namely in the mobility orientation, where the learning is only focused on the visually impaired. The form of anxiety experienced by clients is that the client feels a little trembling and nervous, trembling and feeling insecure about what will happen later, and he is afraid of the danger that will threaten him.

If this happens continuously, it can interfere with their daily activities, and this student will be left behind with other blind friends, while in SLB A, students are taught to be able to walk independently using the help of a cane, even with their limitations. To reduce problems with this client, the right counseling service is needed. One of them is using individual counseling. Individual counseling is a guidance and counseling service that allows students or counselors to get direct face-to-face services (individually) with the supervisor to discuss alleviating personal problems suffered by counselors (Hellen, 2005). In individual counseling services, there are several counseling techniques to overcome academic anxiety in client "A", one of which is systematic desensitization techniques. According to Lazarus & Rachman, systematic desensitization techniques are counseling or psychotherapy techniques that encourage individuals to gradually reduce their anxiety or fear by facing objects or events that are feared or feared in the individual's visualization (Rahayu, 2021).

Systematic desensitization is a behavioral therapy approach that has been proven effective in overcoming various forms of maladaptive anxiety, such as phobias or excessive fears, including in special education contexts such as special schools (SLB). According to Subasman & Aliyyah, (2023), this technique has a number of advantages that make it the right choice in counseling services, both individually and in groups. First, this technique reduces maladaptive anxiety disorders in a structured and gradual manner, so that individuals do not feel forced or pressured when facing objects or situations that are the source of their fears. Through systematic exposure to stimuli, students are encouraged to face their fears slowly and in a controlled environment, while relaxation techniques are applied to create a calmer and more positive response.

In addition, this technique is also effective for individuals who exhibit negative behavior due to trauma or experiences that trigger extreme emotional reactions. In this case, systematic desensitization not only plays a role in reducing emotional tension but also helps individuals form new, more constructive behavioral responses. In the context of students with visual impairments at SLB A, the anxiety they experience is often related to fears associated with mobility or social interaction. Therefore, the application of this technique is aimed at overcoming these fears so that students can develop confidence in performing learning activities such as mobility orientation more actively. Another advantage of this technique is its flexibility in implementation. Although ideally carried out under the guidance of a counselor, individuals who have understood the basic principles of this technique can also apply it independently in their daily lives.

This makes systematic desensitization an adaptive and applicable technique, especially for students who need repeated practice in dealing with anxiety-inducing situations. With proper guidance, students or clients can be trained to recognize their fear triggers, develop a hierarchy of anxiety-inducing situations, and practice relaxation responses as a substitute for fear responses.

The application of this technique on client “A” aims to help overcome fear and anxiety that hinder their participation in the learning process at the sensory special school. During the process, client “A” is accompanied to identify situations that cause discomfort, such as walking in school hallways, reaching objects in new environments, or interacting with teachers and classmates. Next, the client is assisted in ranking these situations based on the level of anxiety they cause, from the least to the most severe. Each stage is addressed gradually, combined with deep breathing techniques and progressive muscle relaxation, enabling the client to develop control over their physical reactions and emotions. The positive effects of this technique are not only seen in reduced anxiety but also in increased courage for clients to try new things they previously avoided. Client “A” showed progress in mobility within the school environment, such as walking independently from the classroom to the therapy room and participating in group learning sessions without showing excessive signs of stress. This shows that systematic desensitization techniques not only suppress anxiety symptoms but also create space for the growth of adaptive behaviors and the strengthening of socio-emotional aspects.

On the other hand, this technique also helps counselors provide clients with new, more positive learning experiences (Shaliadi & Budianto, 2023). When clients are able to face their fears and experience that the situation is not as scary as they imagined, a new, more realistic and empowering perception is formed. This is particularly important in the context of inclusive education, where students with special needs require an approach that focuses on their strengths rather than their limitations. By helping clients develop emotional regulation and self-control through the desensitization process, their confidence in participating in learning activities will gradually increase. However, the success of this technique also depends heavily on the consistency of its implementation, support from the school and family environment, and the client's psychological readiness. Therefore, the approach taken with client “A” also involves the participation of the accompanying teacher and parents, so that the process of strengthening positive behavior can occur continuously both at school and at home.

This collaboration is important to maintain the continuity of the changes that have been achieved, as well as a form of monitoring so that anxiety does not reappear in a more severe form. From a theoretical perspective, this systematic desensitization technique is in line with behaviorist theory, which states that behavior can be changed through a process of relearning. In the case of anxiety, re-learning is carried out by replacing negative responses to certain stimuli with calmer and more positive responses through repeated training. In this context, this technique is not only corrective for existing problems but also preventive against the possibility of similar behavioral disorders emerging in the future. Therefore, systematic desensitization can be considered an

integral part of the self-development strategy for students with special needs who experience emotional or behavioral barriers.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research approach. According to Moloeng, qualitative research is research with the aim of understanding the phenomenon of what the research subject is experiencing as a whole (Budianto, 2024; Lexy, 2007). The method used in this study is a case study. According to Lincoln and Guba, a case study is an in-depth and detailed study of everything related to the subject of the research (Murdiyanto, 2020). The subject of the study is client "A," who is visually impaired at SLB-A PRPCN Palembang. In this case, the researcher explores a specific phenomenon (case) at a time and activity (program, event, process, institution or social group) and collects detailed and in-depth information using various data collection procedures over a certain period because this problem is carried out in depth and focuses on revealing one specific case. The data collection technique in this study uses interviews, observations and documentation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of observations and interviews that have been conducted by the researcher and client "A", it was found that academic anxiety in client "A" before the implementation of the systematic desensitization technique often felt worried about his ability in mobility orientation, had a fear of failure in mobility orientation, always had negative thoughts about mobility orientation, had difficulty making decisions in orientation mobility, feeling excessive excitement when going to mobility orientation, feeling sweat on the palms of the hands during mobility orientation, and having difficulty moving in a new environment during mobility orientation. With that, the researcher uses systematic sensitization techniques to overcome this so that client "A" can carry out activities at school well. This systematic desensitization technique is a behavioral therapy that has long been used to overcome fear and anxiety. So it is not uncommon for many to use this technique to overcome anxiety or a phobia in someone.

After the application of the systematic desensitization technique, there were significant changes in client "A". The application of systematic desensitization techniques consists of three stages, namely the initial stage, the activity stage, and the final stage. The implementation of the systematic desensitization technique for client "A" was carried out from November 25 to December 06, 2024, at SLB-A PRPCN Palembang. The implementation of this counseling was carried out for 4 meetings with a duration of 40 minutes. This study aims to overcome the academic anxiety experienced by client "A", by making a list of the hierarchy of anxiety experienced by the client, after which to relax and then imagine in a comfortable condition and until he experiences anxiety and is expected to remain calm until the anxiety disappears. In each meeting, the client discusses and resolves one aspect. In the first meeting, the researcher discussed the psychological aspect, which was focused on the feelings and thoughts of client "A", namely, worried about his ability in mobility orientation and fear of failure in mobility orientation. In the

second meeting, the researcher discussed the cognitive aspect, which is focused on the client's view, and the way of thinking of client "A" is that he always has negative thoughts about mobility orientation, and has difficulty making decisions in mobility orientation. In the third meeting, the researcher discussed the somatic aspect where which focuses on the form of physical symptoms arising from the anxiety, namely feeling excessive twitching when going to mobility orientation, and feeling sweaty on the palms during mobility orientation. In the fourth meeting, the researcher discussed the motor aspect where which focuses on the physical ability of the client when anxious, namely having difficulty moving in a new environment during the mobility orientation. From these four aspects, client "A" can follow the direction and explanation of the researcher related to overcoming anxiety. And of the four meetings held by client "A" has undergone significant changes when in the fourth meeting, where clients have begun to feel less anxious when training in mobility orientation, and clients have been able to participate in mobility orientation learning and the client's academic anxiety has been successfully resolved.

The systematic desensitization approach in group counseling has been proven to be an effective method in reducing academic anxiety in students, as confirmed in various studies. Research conducted by Heiriyah & Aminah (2022) shows that systematic desensitization techniques in group counseling services can significantly reduce academic anxiety levels. This finding is reinforced by the results of Hartika Utami Fitri's (2017) study, which compared the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring techniques and systematic desensitization techniques in group counseling. The results showed that systematic desensitization was more effective in reducing academic anxiety among students at Senior High School 9 Palembang. These findings provide a strong empirical basis that systematic desensitization techniques are highly feasible for use in guidance and counseling services, particularly for addressing emotional problems such as learning anxiety. Systematic desensitization techniques are a form of behavioral therapy based on the principles of classical conditioning introduced by Ivan Pavlov and further developed by Joseph Wolpe.

This technique works by gradually exposing individuals to situations that cause anxiety while training them to respond with relaxation rather than tension or fear. In practice, students are guided to identify the stimuli that trigger their academic anxiety, then visualize them gradually while applying relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation. This process is carried out systematically and gradually, from the lowest to the highest level of stimulus, so that individuals are slowly able to face situations that they have been avoiding or fearing. The effectiveness of this approach can be seen from changes in students' behavior and emotional responses, which become calmer, more confident, and less panicked when facing academic situations such as exams, presentations, or major assignments. In other words, this technique not only reduces anxiety symptoms but also enhances students' mental resilience in dealing with academic pressure. However, it is important to note that the success of this technique heavily depends on the active involvement of students in the counseling process, their

commitment to attending sessions consistently, and support from their surroundings, such as teachers, parents, and peers.

Nevertheless, as stated in a study by Risyadi (2016) citing Marfiati, the elimination of unwanted responses through classical conditioning is not instantaneous but gradual. This indicates that although counseling results show a decrease in academic anxiety, the process requires repetition and reinforcement for the results to be permanent. In other words, the success of systematic desensitization techniques in case studies like client “A” shows positive results, but follow-up and reinforcement sessions are needed to prevent the recurrence of anxiety symptoms in the future. This indicates that counseling services should not stop after improvements occur but should continue in the form of maintenance or follow-up sessions to ensure that the changes made can last in the long term. Furthermore, this desensitization strategy can also be combined with other approaches such as modeling techniques, where students can observe examples of adaptive behavior in academic situations that trigger anxiety. By observing how other individuals are able to manage academic pressure well, students will be more motivated to try similar strategies. In addition, cognitive-behavioral approaches can also be used as a complement to help students recognize the negative thoughts underlying their anxiety and replace them with more rational and adaptive thoughts. Collaboration between desensitization and cognitive approaches can strengthen the effectiveness of counseling interventions, so that students not only learn to control their physiological responses to anxiety, but are also able to change the underlying thought patterns that cause these feelings.

In the context of education, the role of teachers and counselors is very important in detecting and addressing academic anxiety issues early on. Teachers who are sensitive to changes in student behavior, such as decreased participation in class, fear of exams, or frequent avoidance of certain tasks, can refer students to school counselors for further assistance. Meanwhile, school counselors can develop structured, systematic desensitization-based group counseling programs tailored to students' needs. This program not only helps students overcome academic anxiety but also strengthens social relationships among students in the counseling group, which in turn can increase social support and reduce academic stress levels. In developing guidance and counseling services in schools, systematic desensitization techniques need to be positioned as one of the main strategies for addressing anxiety issues. However, this approach must still be tailored to the individual characteristics of students, including age, anxiety level, cognitive ability, and emotional readiness. The use of anxiety assessment instruments before and after intervention is important to objectively measure the effectiveness of the program. In addition, documentation of the counseling process is also an important element in evaluating progress and as a basis for planning further interventions.

Theoretically, systematic desensitization techniques are based on the principles of behaviorist theory, which states that human behavior, including anxiety, is the result of learning and can be changed through a process of relearning. Therefore, if academic anxiety arises as a result of negative learning experiences, it can be reconditioned through positive learning experiences using desensitization techniques. With the help of a

counselor, students can recondition their anxiety responses into more adaptive responses through a structured and repetitive process. In addition to the technical aspects of its application, it is also important to pay attention to external factors that influence the success of this technique. A supportive school environment, good relationships between counselors and students, and active parental involvement are key factors in the success of counseling programs.

Students who receive emotional support from their surroundings tend to show higher motivation to change and maintain the positive changes they have achieved. However, there are also challenges that need to be addressed in the application of this technique. One of them is the limited time available for group counseling sessions in schools, especially when the academic schedule is very tight. Another challenge is the lack of understanding among some students or even school officials regarding the importance of addressing anxiety issues psychologically, resulting in limited support for counseling programs. To overcome these challenges, it is important for schools to conduct regular outreach on the benefits of counseling services, build a school culture that cares about mental health, and involve all school elements in efforts to prevent and address students' psychological problems. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that systematic desensitization is an effective, applicable, and scientifically based method for addressing students' academic anxiety. Through this approach, students not only learn to overcome their fears but also develop skills to face academic challenges healthily and productively. The success of this approach reinforces the role of guidance and counseling services in education as a crucial component supporting academic success and psychological well-being. Thus, the implementation of systematic desensitization techniques is not merely a temporary solution but an integral part of long-term efforts to build students' mental resilience, enabling them to navigate the dynamics of the educational landscape and life's challenges in general.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted by the researcher above, it can be concluded that after conducting interviews and observations, client "A" feels worried about his ability in mobility orientation, has fear of mobility orientation, has negative thoughts about mobility orientation, has difficulty making decisions in mobility orientation, feels excessive heart rate when going to mobility orientation, Feeling sweat on the palms of the hands during mobility orientation, and having difficulty moving in a new environment during mobility orientation. Then after applying the systematic desensitization technique, client "A" has begun to feel a significant change from usual, namely the client has begun to be confident in his own abilities, is no longer afraid when he fails, has been able to reduce excessive negative thoughts about mobility orientation, has been able to make his own decisions about mobility orientation, has begun to be less nervous when it comes to mobility orientation, rarely sweat on the palms, and have begun to be able to move in a new environment when the orientation of mobility. From the explanation above, it shows that the application of this systematic desensitization

technique was successful in overcoming academic anxiety in blind "A" clients at SLB-A PRPCN Palembang.

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