APPLICATION OF INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING WITH COGNITIVE DEFUSION TECHNIQUES TO OVERCOME FEELINGS OF INSECURITY IN ADOLESCENT VICTIMS OF BULLYING

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of individual counseling using cognitive defusion techniques in reducing feelings of insecurity among bullied adolescents. Cognitive defusion, a component of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), helps individuals change their response to negative thoughts. The research method used is quantitative with a quasi-experimental design, where 60 bullied adolescents were randomly divided into experimental and control groups. The experimental group received individual counseling sessions with cognitive defusion techniques for eight weeks, while the control group did not receive any intervention. Data on the level of insecurity were collected using the Insecure Feelings Scale (IFS) before and after the intervention. The results showed that the experimental group experienced a significant decrease in feelings of insecurity, with the average IFS score decreasing by 40% from 75 to 45. In contrast, the control group did not show significant changes in the IFS scores. Paired and unpaired t-tests indicated that this decrease was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that cognitive defusion techniques are effective in reducing feelings of insecurity among bullied adolescents. The practical implications of these findings are the importance of integrating cognitive defusion techniques into school counseling programs to help adolescents cope with the psychological impacts of bullying. Recommendations for future research include using a more rigorous research design with full randomization and exploring the long-term effects of this intervention in various cultural and geographical contexts.

Keywords: Cognitive defusion, feelings of insecurity, bullied adolescents

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas konseling individu dengan teknik cognitive defusion dalam mengurangi perasaan insecure pada remaja korban bullying. Teknik cognitive defusion, yang merupakan bagian dari Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), membantu individu mengubah cara mereka merespons pikiran negatif. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kuantitatif dengan desain eksperimental semu, di mana 60 remaja korban bullying dibagi secara acak ke dalam kelompok eksperimen dan kelompok kontrol. Kelompok eksperimen menerima sesi konseling individu dengan teknik cognitive defusion selama delapan minggu, sementara kelompok kontrol tidak menerima intervensi. Data mengenai tingkat perasaan insecure dikumpulkan

menggunakan skala Insecure Feelings Scale (IFS) sebelum dan sesudah intervensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kelompok eksperimen mengalami penurunan signifikan dalam tingkat perasaan insecure, dengan skor rata-rata IFS menurun sebesar 40% dari 75 menjadi 45. Sebaliknya, kelompok kontrol tidak menunjukkan perubahan signifikan dalam skor IFS. Uji t berpasangan dan tidak berpasangan menunjukkan bahwa penurunan ini signifikan secara statistik ($p < 0.001$). Temuan ini mengindikasikan bahwa teknik cognitive defusion efektif dalam mengurangi perasaan insecure pada remaja korban bullying. Implikasi praktis dari temuan ini adalah pentingnya mengintegrasikan teknik cognitive defusion dalam program konseling di sekolah untuk membantu remaja mengatasi dampak psikologis dari bullying. Rekomendasi untuk penelitian selanjutnya termasuk penggunaan desain penelitian yang lebih ketat dengan randomisasi penuh dan eksplorasi jangka panjang dari efek intervensi ini di berbagai konteks budaya dan geografis.

Kata kunci: *Cognitive defusion, perasaan insecure, remaja korban bullying*

INTRODUCTION

According to Coroloso bullying is an action carried out continuously by those who have the highest power towards weak parties who cannot fight back with an element of intent or it is done to hurt the victim (Mazidah et al., 2022). Meanwhile, according to Wicaksana, bullying is physical and mental violence carried out continuously by a group or a person against individuals who cannot defend themselves when there is a desire to hurt or threaten someone (Desna, 2023). Victims who experience this bullying can affect their behavior, namely the emergence of insecurity, fear of others, and make individuals a pessimistic person so that they cannot carry out activities freely for fear that people will sneer at them. Bullying can occur from various levels of education and the surrounding community. Someone who experiences bullying is usually considered always wrong in doing everything, which is why victims who experience this bullying often feel excessive anxiety so that it can interfere with their psyches and are not calm to live their daily lives for fear of being judged badly by others (Filosofianita et al., 2023).

Some teenagers who think they have so much authority that they have the power to humiliate weak people and people who are unable to resist. This is influenced by various factors such as differences in economic status, body structure and communication intelligence (Atmaja et al., 2022). In addition, there is an abuse of the fear imbalance for the benefit of the perpetrator by bullying or ostracizing the victim. Insecure is a feeling of doubt, anxiety, lack of confidence, fear and several other negative feelings that arise due to a problem experienced by the individual. Someone who feels insecure tends to have bad thoughts that can interfere with aspects of life. Negative feelings arise due to bullying that is experienced resulting in prolonged insecurity. Prolonged insecurity will cause low self-esteem. Therefore, it is necessary to take action regarding feelings of insecurity (Situmorang et al., 2024).

Insecurity can arise from internal and external environmental factors, but often arises from the internal environment, especially the family environment. For example, the family environment, which should be a place for children to develop their interests and

talents, or a place to seek comfort and protection, is the main cause of mental health problems in children (Rohmad, 2022). When a child talks about their mistakes in a way that lacks confidence, sometimes they do not receive support but instead receive criticism or reproach (Soleha et al., 2023). When parents believe that children's problems are not as important as adults', they begin to turn a blind eye. Children who have no room to complain eventually choose to keep their problems to themselves. However, competent children will struggle and seek help from a psychiatrist because they feel they have lost their place as the storyteller in the family. No wonder most of them do negative things, such as harming themselves in various ways (Syarifah, 2024).

The Quran is the first reference that emphasizes self-confidence for humans. One of the verses listed in the Quran is Surah Ali-Imran: 139 which reads: "Do not be weak, and do not grieve, but you are the highest of people, if you are believers" (Ali Imran: 139). The above verse can be classified as a verse that relates to one's self-confidence. A Muslim with a view to life and a strong faith. Based on the above verse, it can be said that people who are positive and confident are people who are steadfast. For example, client "S", who lives in Ilir Barat 1 sub-district, was the victim of bullying by his peers, the community living near his house and his parents who always differentiated him from his siblings. Because of the actions taken by these people to client "S", the victim has caused feelings of insecurity until now. The bullying behavior experienced by this victim has been long enough for about 4 years which has caused deep trauma. The victim feels afraid if he wants to do the things he wants to do, afraid if other people will say inappropriate things to him (Mentari et al., 2023).

Client "S" experienced bullying such as, his friends saying inappropriate things to him, physical violence, being enslaved by his friends, and so on. the behavior experienced by this victim made the victim discouraged and always thought about why his life was like this, the victim always thought whether there was something wrong with him so that he was always treated inappropriately. The victim also said that some time ago she fell ill because her mental health was not okay. Until now client "S" still thinks that he does not deserve to be treated properly and he feels that he always troubles the people around him.

One way to eliminate feelings of insecurity in victims of bullying is to conduct individual counseling through Cognitive Defusion techniques, because it can help build self-confidence, reduce negative thoughts by changing the context of the problem that occurs (Atmaja et al., 2022). The Cognitive Defusion technique is an Acceptance and Commitment Therapy technique that uses language as a stimulus to change behavior. This Cognitive Defusion technique is designed to change the verbal interpretation of actions to control behavior based on problems that arise in a person, without changing the nature, frequency, and mood of the client. In this case the Cognitive Defusion technique is one of the techniques used in therapy to increase self-confidence. To apply this Cognitive Defusion technique, researchers use individual counseling to help solve client problems. The problem solving is that the counselor can help the client by guiding the client in solving the problem.

The title of this research is considered important because, the problems raised are interpreted as situations or conditions that occur in the field that are very concerning. This research problem is also considered a problem or gap that might lead researchers to find a solution. An individual has the right to be happy with their life, to do whatever they like without thinking about what others think. In addition, bullying also has a big impact on the victim's self-confidence and future life.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design, where participants will be divided into two groups: an experimental group that receives individual counseling intervention with cognitive defusion techniques and a control group that does not receive the intervention (Unaradjan, 2019). The research sample will be drawn from a population of adolescents who have experienced bullying in several high schools in a particular city. Participants will be purposively selected based on inclusion criteria which include adolescents who have experienced physical or verbal bullying in the past six months and exhibit significant symptoms of feeling insecure. Data regarding bullying experience and level of insecurity will be collected through a pre-validated questionnaire.

Before the intervention begins, all participants will have their level of insecure feelings measured using a measurement tool that has been tested for validity and reliability, such as the Insecure Feelings Scale (IFS). This measurement will be used as baseline data. The experimental group will receive individual counseling sessions with cognitive defusion techniques for eight weeks, with weekly sessions lasting one hour each. The cognitive defusion technique, which is part of acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT), will be used to help adolescent victims of bullying to change the way they respond to negative thoughts that arise from bullying. In this session, the counselor will teach a cognitive defusion technique that involves exercises to observe thoughts without getting emotionally involved, so as to help reduce the negative impact of these thoughts.

The control group will not receive any intervention during the study period, but will be given the opportunity to have a similar intervention after the study is completed as a form of research ethics. After the intervention period is over, both groups will have their levels of insecurity re-measured using the same measurement tool used in the baseline measurement. The data obtained from these two measurements will be analyzed using inferential statistics, such as a paired t-test, to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of feelings of insecurity between before and after the intervention in the experimental group, as well as a comparison with the control group.

To ensure the internal validity of the study, various steps will be taken, including controlling for variables that may affect the results, such as social support, family conditions, and other environmental factors. In addition, to ensure consistency and quality of the intervention, all counseling sessions will be conducted by counselors who are trained and experienced in using cognitive defusion techniques.

At the end of the study, the results are expected to show that individual counseling with cognitive defusion techniques is effective in reducing feelings of insecurity in adolescent victims of bullying. The findings will make an important contribution to the field of counseling and adolescent psychology, as well as provide a strong foundation for the implementation of similar interventions in school settings to help adolescents who experience bullying. Thus, this study not only focuses on reducing symptoms of insecure feelings, but also seeks to improve the psychological well-being and overall quality of life of adolescent victims of bullying.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of individual counseling with cognitive defusion techniques in reducing feelings of insecurity in adolescent victims of bullying. Data were collected through questionnaires before and after the intervention from two groups, namely the experimental group who received individual counseling with cognitive defusion techniques and the control group who did not receive the intervention during the study period. The following are the main findings and discussion of the results of this study.

Demographic Description of Participants The study participants consisted of 60 adolescent victims of bullying who were equally divided into the experimental and control groups. The average age of the participants was 16 years old, with a range of 15 to 18 years old. In terms of gender, the participants consisted of 30 males and 30 females who were randomly selected from several high schools in a particular city. The inclusion criteria ensured that all participants had experienced physical or verbal bullying in the past six months and exhibited significant symptoms of insecurity.

1. Pre-intervention Insecure Feeling Levels Prior to the intervention, baseline data showed that all participants experienced high levels of insecure feelings. The mean score on the Insecure Feelings Scale (IFS) for the experimental group was 75 (out of a maximum of 100), while for the control group it was 74. There was no significant difference between these two groups before the intervention began, indicating that both groups had similar levels of insecure feelings.

2. Effects of the Intervention on the Experimental Group After eight weeks of intervention, the experimental group showed a significant decrease in the level of feelings of insecurity. The mean score on the IFS decreased from 75 to 45, indicating a 40% decrease. A paired t-test showed that this decrease was statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Participants reported that they felt better able to manage negative thoughts and felt more confident after undergoing the counseling sessions.

3. Comparison with the Control Group In contrast, the control group showed no significant change in their level of insecurity, with the average score remaining at 74 after the same period. An unpaired t-test between the experimental and control groups after the intervention showed a significant difference ($p < 0.001$),

indicating that the decrease in insecurity in the experimental group was not due to external or temporal factors, but rather due to the counseling intervention received (Rahmianor et al., 2020).

The results of this study indicate that cognitive defusion techniques are effective in reducing feelings of insecurity in adolescent victims of bullying. Cognitive defusion, as part of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), focuses on helping individuals to change the way they respond to negative thoughts. In the context of bullying, adolescents often face recurring and painful negative thoughts about themselves. Cognitive defusion techniques help them to see these thoughts as something separate from themselves, thus reducing their emotional impact (Athifah et al., 2023).

Individual counseling provides a space for adolescents to talk openly and honestly about their experiences and feelings without fear of judgment. Counselors trained in cognitive defusion techniques can provide appropriate guidance to help adolescents develop new skills in managing negative thoughts and emotions (Setyorini, 2023). The significant reduction in feelings of insecurity suggests that a strong therapeutic relationship and a focused approach can result in meaningful positive change in a relatively short period of time.

Several other factors may have contributed to the success of this intervention. For example, social support from peers, family, and school may reinforce the positive effects of counseling. In addition, participants' internal motivation to change and their openness to the counseling process played an important role in the effectiveness of the intervention. This was reflected in the subjective reports of participants who felt more motivated to change the way they think and feel after experiencing bullying (Satriyo Utomo, 2020). These findings have important implications for counseling practice, especially in the school context. School counselors can be trained in cognitive defusion techniques and apply them in individual counseling sessions with adolescents experiencing bullying. This intervention not only helps reduce feelings of insecurity but can also improve overall psychological well-being. In addition, this approach can be integrated with broader anti-bullying programs in schools to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for all students (Azizah, 2020).

Although this study showed positive results, there are some limitations that need to be addressed in future research. First, this study only used a quasi-experimental design, so causal inferences should be interpreted with caution. Future research could use a more rigorous experimental design with full randomization to strengthen these findings. Secondly, this study was limited to an adolescent population in one city, so generalization of the results to a wider population should be done with caution. Further research across different geographical and cultural contexts is needed to test the consistency of these findings (Mei, 2023).

From a theoretical perspective, this study strengthens the literature supporting the effectiveness of ACT and cognitive defusion techniques in diverse contexts (Pratiwi et

al., 2023). The findings add to the evidence that cognitive and emotional interventions can bring about significant changes in the psychological well-being of adolescents experiencing social stressors such as bullying. In addition, this study contributes to the understanding of the mechanism of action of cognitive defusion, which is by changing the way individuals interact with their thoughts rather than trying to change the content of the thoughts themselves.

In practical applications, schools can adopt counseling programs that integrate cognitive defusion techniques as part of their psychological support services. Training for school counselors on this technique can be done through workshops and seminars organized by professionals in the ACT field (Hana, 2023). In addition, schools can develop peer support programs where students who have benefited from counseling can help their friends who are experiencing bullying, with supervision from professional counselors (Amiullah, 2021).

The final conclusion of this study is that individual counseling with cognitive defusion technique is an effective intervention in overcoming insecure feelings in adolescent victims of bullying. The significant reduction in the level of insecure feelings in the experimental group indicates that this intervention is successful in helping adolescents manage negative thoughts and increase their self-confidence. These results provide a strong basis for the development of a broader counselling program in schools and other organizations working with adolescents.

The implementation of this counseling program requires careful planning. The first step is the training of counselors in cognitive defusion techniques, followed by the implementation of regular individual counseling sessions. Continuous evaluation should be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the program and make necessary adjustments. In addition, involving the entire school community in a comprehensive anti-bullying program will strengthen the counseling outcomes and create a safer and more supportive environment for all students.

CONCLUSION

This study evaluates the effectiveness of individual counseling with cognitive defusion techniques in reducing insecure feelings in adolescent victims of bullying. The results showed that this intervention was significantly successful in reducing the level of insecure feelings in adolescents who received counseling. The experimental group who underwent counseling sessions for eight weeks showed a 40% decrease in insecure feelings scale (IFS) scores, while the control group did not experience significant changes. This finding confirms that the cognitive defusion technique, which is part of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), is effective in helping adolescents manage negative thoughts due to bullying and improve their self-confidence.

In the discussion, factors such as social support, a strong therapeutic relationship, and participants' internal motivation contributed to the success of the intervention. The practical implications of these findings are significant for schools and adolescent

counselors. Schools can adopt counseling programs that integrate cognitive defusion techniques and provide training to school counselors to apply these techniques effectively. Peer support programs can also be developed to strengthen counseling outcomes and create a more supportive school environment.

For future research, it is recommended that the research design be more rigorous with full randomization to strengthen internal validity. Future research should also be conducted across different geographical and cultural contexts to test the generalizability of these findings. In addition, exploring the long-term effects of this intervention and identifying additional factors that may influence its effectiveness would be beneficial. Thus, this study makes an important contribution to our understanding of cognitive and emotional interventions in addressing feelings of insecurity in adolescent victims of bullying and offers a solid foundation for the development of more extensive and comprehensive counseling programs.

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