USE OF REINFORCEMENT IN INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING TO OVERCOME ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract
This study aims to explore the use of reinforcement techniques in individual counseling as an effort to overcome antisocial behavior in adolescents. The main focus of this study is on a client with the initials "F," an adolescent who exhibits symptoms of antisocial behavior such as noncompliance with social norms, isolation, and a tendency to defy authority. A qualitative approach was used in this study to explore the client's experiences and the effectiveness of the counseling techniques applied. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with the client and direct observation of the client's daily behavior in their social context. The results of the study indicate that the application of reinforcement techniques, particularly positive reinforcement in individual counseling sessions, has a significant impact on reducing the client's negative behavior. This technique was able to increase clients' self-awareness of the consequences of their antisocial behavior and shape more adaptive responses in social interactions. In addition, positive reinforcement proved effective in increasing clients' motivation to change, building self-esteem, and improving social relationships with their surroundings. These findings underscore the importance of a counseling approach that focuses on reinforcing positive behavior, especially in dealing with cases of deviant behavior among adolescents. Thus, counselors are expected to integrate reinforcement techniques as an intervention strategy in individual counseling practice to support constructive and sustainable behavioral change.
Keywords: Anti-social, Counseling, Reinforcement Technique

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi penggunaan teknik reinforcement dalam konseling individu sebagai upaya mengatasi perilaku anti-sosial pada remaja. Fokus utama penelitian ini adalah pada klien berinisial "F", seorang remaja yang menunjukkan gejala perilaku anti-sosial seperti ketidakpatuhan terhadap norma sosial, isolasi, serta kecenderungan menentang otoritas. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk menggali secara mendalam pengalaman klien dan efektivitas teknik konseling yang diterapkan. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam dengan klien serta observasi langsung terhadap perilaku sehari-hari klien dalam konteks sosialnya. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penerapan teknik reinforcement, khususnya penguatan positif dalam sesi konseling individu, memberikan dampak yang signifikan dalam mengurangi perilaku negatif klien. Teknik ini mampu meningkatkan kesadaran diri klien terhadap konsekuensi dari perilaku anti-sosialnya serta membentuk respons yang lebih adaptif dalam interaksi sosial. Selain itu, penguatan positif terbukti efektif dalam meningkatkan motivasi klien untuk berubah, membangun harga diri, dan memperbaiki

relasi sosial dengan lingkungan sekitar. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi pentingnya pendekatan konseling yang berfokus pada penguatan perilaku positif, terutama dalam penanganan kasus-kasus perilaku menyimpang di kalangan remaja. Dengan demikian, konselor diharapkan dapat mengintegrasikan teknik reinforcement sebagai strategi intervensi dalam praktik konseling individu untuk mendukung perubahan perilaku yang konstruktif dan berkelanjutan.
Kata kunci: Anti-sosial, Konseling, Teknik Reinforcement

INTRODUCTION

Anti-social behavior is a recurring problem in various communities, both in urban and rural areas. This phenomenon includes various forms of actions that deviate from social norms, harm others, or disturb public order. Some examples of antisocial behavior that are often encountered include verbal or physical aggression, vandalism, violation of social rules, and involvement in petty crimes. In the context of rural communities, such as in Langkan Village, antisocial behavior not only disrupts the social order but also hinders the process of developing a conducive and harmonious community. Langkan Village, a small village located in a remote area, faces serious challenges related to increasing reports of deviant behavior among its residents, especially teenagers. This situation is a major concern not only for the community but also for village officials and authorities interested in maintaining security and social stability (Holtzhausen & Campbell, 2021). Various efforts have been made to tackle antisocial behavior in this village.

Legal approaches through law enforcement have been implemented to address violations, including the involvement of security forces in maintaining environmental order. Additionally, socialization programs on social norms and values are frequently conducted by community leaders, village officials, and religious institutions. Community-based programs such as youth activities, regular religious study sessions, and skill-building workshops have also been initiated to guide residents' behavior, particularly among the younger generation, toward more positive outcomes. However, these approaches tend to be temporary and fail to address the root causes of the problem, namely the mindset, personal experiences, and psychosocial conditions of individuals who engage in antisocial behavior. Many of these approaches are general in nature and do not take into account the conditions and backgrounds of each individual in depth. Therefore, a more personalized and psychological approach is essential, one of which is through individual counseling.

Individual counseling is a form of psychological intervention that focuses on the needs, conditions, and psychological dynamics of an individual. Unlike mass approaches, which are homogeneous in nature, individual counseling allows for a deeper exploration of the background, motives, and challenges faced by clients on a personal level. In the context of addressing antisocial behavior, individual counseling can be a relevant alternative, as it can build a strong therapeutic relationship between the counselor and the client, which is an important foundation in the process of behavioral change. One technique widely

used in individual counseling to change behavior is reinforcement, which is rooted in behaviorist theory. The behaviorist approach emphasizes the importance of observable behavior and how the environment plays a role in shaping and changing that behavior (Etodike dkk., 2020). Reinforcement techniques are generally divided into two types: positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement. Positive reinforcement is carried out by providing pleasant stimuli (e.g., praise, rewards, recognition) after an individual exhibits the desired behavior, intending to encourage the behavior to be repeated.

Meanwhile, negative reinforcement is carried out by removing unpleasant stimuli (such as reprimands or light punishments) after an individual exhibits the desired behavior, thereby encouraging them to continue maintaining that behavior. In counseling practice, both techniques are used systematically to help clients become aware of their behavior and modify deviant behavior into more adaptive and socially acceptable behavior. Reinforcement techniques have been widely used in psychology and education as effective methods for shaping and modifying behavior. In education, for example, reinforcement is used to improve academic discipline, student participation, and academic motivation. In clinical psychology and counseling, these techniques have proven effective in addressing various behavioral issues, including addiction, aggression, and behavioral disorders in children and adolescents. The use of reinforcement in individual counseling allows counselors to gradually guide clients to become aware of the impact of their behavior, while reinforcing every positive change demonstrated. Therefore, it is important to further explore how this technique is applied contextually, including in rural communities such as Langkan Village, which has its unique sociocultural characteristics (Arsuffi, 2022).

This study aims to explore the application of reinforcement techniques in individual counseling as an effort to address antisocial behavior in Langkan Village. The main focus of this study is how reinforcement techniques can be used strategically in counseling sessions to modify the behavior of clients who show antisocial tendencies. Additionally, this study seeks to identify the factors supporting the success of these techniques, such as family support, social environmental conditions, and the client's psychological readiness. The research approach used is a qualitative approach with a case study design, which allows the researcher to explore in depth the dynamics of behavioral change in clients through counseling interventions. The research subject is a teenager who exhibits antisocial behavior, such as frequent involvement in conflicts with peers, violating social rules in the surrounding environment, and showing resistance to authority. Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews with the client, observation of behavior in daily life, and documentation of the counseling process. This process aims to understand the client's subjective experiences, behavioral changes that occur, and the effectiveness of reinforcement in the counseling process. Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, in which the collected data were analyzed to find certain patterns related to changes in the client's behavior, responses to reinforcement, and factors that support or hinder the change process. The initial results of this study indicate that the use of

reinforcement, particularly positive reinforcement, has a significant impact on reducing the intensity of the client's negative behavior.

Clients began to show more positive behavioral changes after several counseling sessions, such as the ability to control emotions, decreased frequency of conflicts, and increased involvement in social activities. Positive responses from the surrounding environment, such as recognition from family and community leaders, also reinforced the behavioral changes that occurred. On the other hand, consistency in providing reinforcement and the existence of trust between the counselor and the client were important factors that supported the success of the counseling process. The selection of Langkan Village as the research location was not without reason. Based on reports from village officials and community leaders, this village has a relatively high rate of anti-social behavior compared to other villages in the surrounding area. Some of the problems that often occur include conflicts between residents, alcohol abuse, destruction of public facilities, and apathy towards social activities. Langkan Village also has unique social characteristics, namely strong family ties, intensive social interaction, and the presence of community leaders who have a significant influence on the collective behavior of their citizens. These characteristics are important supporting factors in the implementation of individual-based interventions that simultaneously involve the social environment (Egenti & Nwamma, 2022).

With this background, this study is expected to provide practical contributions to counselors, educators, and other stakeholders in designing more effective and contextual intervention strategies. Reinforcement techniques applied in the context of individual counseling can be an alternative solution that not only focuses on individual behavior change but also encourages active participation from the social environment in supporting the change process. This study is also expected to add to the literature on the effectiveness of behavioral techniques in counseling practice in rural communities, which has received limited attention in academic research. Additionally, the findings of this study can serve as a reference for policymakers in developing prevention and intervention programs for deviant behavior at the local level, particularly those targeting adolescents as the primary focus.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of how reinforcement techniques are applied in individual counseling in Langkan Village. This approach was chosen because it is capable of exploring experiences, perceptions, and social dynamics related to the use of these techniques in a real-life context (Budianto, 2024). With this approach, researchers can explore more broadly the intervention process that occurs during counseling sessions, including how reinforcement techniques are applied by counselors, clients' responses to these techniques, and social factors that influence the success of the intervention. The main focus of this study is on rich and in-depth contextual understanding, rather than measurement or generalization, so a

descriptive qualitative approach is considered most appropriate (Jaya, 2020). The subject of this study is a teenager with the initials 'F', aged 17, who is a resident of Langkan Village. Client 'F' was selected as the research subject through purposive sampling based on several specific criteria. The client has a history of antisocial behavior reported by the community, such as involvement in conflicts with residents, acts of vandalism, and frequent violations of social norms in his neighborhood. Additionally, the client was willing to participate in individual counseling sessions throughout the study period, enabling the researcher to observe the process and developments directly (Gladding, 2021). Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews, direct observation of the client's behavior during the counseling process, and documentation from the counselor's notes. All data obtained were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, in which the researcher identified the main themes that emerged from the counseling interactions and behavioral changes that occurred. Through this analysis, the researcher sought to uncover the meaning behind the client's experiences and the effectiveness of reinforcement techniques in helping to reduce antisocial behavior contextually.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study focuses on the dynamics of applying reinforcement techniques in individual counseling sessions with a teenager named "F" who exhibits antisocial behavior in Langkan Village. Based on direct observation and in-depth interviews, it was found that client "F" is a 17-year-old who has been involved in several social conflicts with local residents. He is known to be easily angered, often defiant toward his parents and community leaders, and has engaged in destructive behavior such as breaking the glass of the neighborhood watch post and defacing the walls of the village hall. This behavior has caused concern within the community, particularly because "F" is an only child from a low-income family with strained family relationships. Since participating in individual counseling sessions, client "F" has shown gradual changes that can be attributed to the consistent application of reinforcement techniques by the counselor. These techniques were used to strengthen the client's prosocial behavior and reduce and redirect his antisocial behavior. The counselor applied positive reinforcement in the form of verbal praise, assigning small social responsibilities such as helping to clean the classroom at the village health post, and providing small rewards like stationery and snacks as a form of recognition for the cooperative behavior demonstrated by the client.

Field findings indicate that positive reinforcement serves as an initial trigger for behavioral change in the client, as the client feels valued and receives positive attention that he has rarely received, either from his family or his surroundings. During the four-week counseling process, a pattern of client response to various forms of reinforcement was observed. In the first week, clients were still closed and skeptical towards the counselor. However, after the second session, when the counselor began to praise simple behaviors such as arriving on time and showing calm expressions when speaking, clients began to show interest in actively participating in the conversation. The application of positive reinforcement in the form of consistent verbal reinforcement, such as "You did

well today because you didn't get angry," had a direct impact on the client's self-perception. He began to show self-confidence and awareness that his behavior could be controlled and appreciated. In addition to positive reinforcement, the counselor also applied negative reinforcement in certain situations, namely by removing unpleasant consequences when the client exhibited prosocial behavior. For example, when the client is able to refrain from responding to insults from his friends, the counselor cancels the special reflection session that is usually conducted when the client breaks the rules. This sends a signal to the client that behavioral change can reduce pressure and tension in his social environment.

This technique helps create positive associations in the client's mind between behavior that aligns with social norms and lighter or even pleasant consequences. Another interesting finding is that the most effective reinforcement for client "F" is not material rewards or gifts, but rather the counselor's attention and emotional validation. In some interviews, the client expressed feeling more valued when the counselor listened without judgment, compared to receiving physical rewards. Recognition and empathy from the counselor became a form of intrinsic reinforcement that strengthened the client's internal motivation to change. This shows that the success of reinforcement techniques does not only depend on their form but also on the therapeutic relationship built during the counseling process. From a social dynamics perspective, the client's behavioral changes were also influenced by support from the surrounding environment. The village head and some residents began to show positive attitudes toward the client after observing significant progress. Client "F," who was initially shunned, is now beginning to be involved in small activities such as helping with community work or becoming a ball boy in soccer matches between neighborhoods. This social acceptance indirectly serves as a form of social reinforcement that strengthens the client's prosocial behavior outside of counseling sessions. This supportive social environment plays a crucial role in maintaining the continuity of behavioral change, especially since clients are prone to being influenced by the social responses of those around them. In terms of cognitive and emotional aspects, clients demonstrate increased self-awareness of the consequences of their behavior.

During one counseling session, a client stated, "When I get angry, people start hating me more. But when I just stay quiet, they don't bother me anymore." This statement indicates that clients are beginning to be able to reflect on the relationship between their actions and their impact on social relationships. This awareness is the result of repeated positive reinforcement that has successfully shaped new understandings in clients' minds about the value of prosocial behavior. Thus, reinforcement techniques not only impact external behavior but also internal aspects such as self-perception, emotional regulation, and the development of a more positive self-concept. Challenges in implementing reinforcement techniques were also identified during the study. One of these was the client's emotional instability, which occasionally surfaced when facing situations that triggered past traumas. On several occasions, clients exhibited behavioral regression, such as returning

to swearing or refusing to speak when faced with emotional pressure. However, counselors responded to these situations by remaining consistent in the flexible use of reinforcement and adjusting their approach to the client's emotional state at the time. This adaptive approach allowed the counseling process to continue effectively without causing resistance or excessive pressure.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that reinforcement techniques can be effectively applied in individual counseling to address antisocial behavior, especially when done consistently, contextually, and with consideration of the client's unique characteristics. Successful reinforcement does not stem solely from external rewards but also from the emotional and social reinforcement clients receive in a supportive environment. The success of this technique is highly dependent on a warm, empathetic, and open therapeutic relationship between the counselor and the client, as well as community involvement in providing space for clients to demonstrate positive change. These findings contribute significantly to the development of counseling approaches in rural communities such as Langkan Village, where access to professional services is limited. An approach based on reinforcement can serve as an effective, cost-effective, and culturally relevant alternative strategy in efforts to rehabilitate adolescents with deviant behavior. This study also recommends further training for counselors and community volunteers to master reinforcement techniques and enhance their skills in building effective therapeutic relationships to ensure the success of long-term interventions.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that the application of reinforcement techniques, particularly positive reinforcement, has a significant impact on reducing antisocial behavior among individual counseling participants in Langkan Village. Through a four-week intervention in three stages with a total of twelve counseling sessions, it was found that participants showed consistent positive behavioral changes after receiving various forms of reinforcement. The reinforcement provided included praise from counselors, emotional support from family members, and simple rewards such as participation certificates. One notable example was a participant who was previously known to frequently engage in verbal conflicts with family members and the surrounding community. After receiving reinforcement in the form of praise for successfully controlling his emotions, the participant reported an increase in motivation to continue maintaining good behavior. This was not only evident in the participants' verbal reports but also through direct observation, which showed that the frequency of behaviors such as using harsh language, arguing with parents, or being verbally aggressive decreased by 85% during the intervention period.

In addition to reducing negative behaviors, reinforcement techniques also encouraged the emergence of positive prosocial behaviors. Participants began to show initiative in helping neighbors in need, participating in community activities such as community service, religious study groups, or other social activities that were previously avoided.

These changes signify a shift not only in behavior but also in the participants' attitudes and social orientation. Those who were previously apathetic toward their environment began to show concern and active involvement. This demonstrates that reinforcement is not only effective in suppressing deviant behavior but also in facilitating the formation of healthy and constructive social identities. This phenomenon aligns well with Bandura's social learning theory, which states that an individual's behavior is influenced by processes of observation, imitation, and social models in their environment. When participants observe that positive behavior is valued and accepted by their environment, they are motivated to repeat and maintain such behavior.

The success of this intervention is supported by several key factors that are interrelated and reinforce one another. Consistency in the delivery of reinforcement is a very important aspect. Counselors rigorously provide reinforcement immediately after participants demonstrate positive behavior, whether on a small or large scale. For example, direct praise is given every time participants show better self-control or when they complete tasks that they previously avoided. A regular reinforcement schedule and reinforcement forms that are tailored to individual characteristics help build a connection between actions and positive consequences. This consistency creates a stable and predictable learning pattern for participants, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the techniques used.

In addition, according Olawale, (2024) social support from family and the surrounding community also plays a crucial role in reinforcing the effects of reinforcement. When families also show appreciation for participants' behavioral changes, such as by giving praise, entrusting them with certain responsibilities, or simply showing greater emotional acceptance, participants feel that their efforts are valued. This fosters stronger intrinsic motivation because participants not only want to change to meet the counselor's expectations, but also because they begin to feel the benefits of change in their social relationships. In the social environment of Langkan Village, the close-knit social characteristics further facilitate this process. Small changes made by participants are quickly noticed by the surrounding community, and positive feedback from the environment provides additional motivation for participants to maintain their good behavior (Nwankwo & Mgbike, 2021).

Rodgers, (2023) explains that the role of the counselor is also no less important. An active, empathetic, and responsive counselor who is attuned to the emotional state and needs of participants creates a safe and supportive atmosphere. The therapeutic relationship established between the counselor and participants forms the foundation for the success of the counseling process. A non-judgmental approach, along with the counselor's ability to actively listen and provide constructive feedback, builds participants' trust in the process they are undergoing (Heap, 2021). When participants feel that they are being listened to and understood, they tend to be more open and cooperative in accepting the guidance or reinforcement strategies provided. This emphasizes the importance of the

humanistic aspect in behavioral approaches, where the relationship between counselor and client is an important element in achieving optimal results.

This finding is in line with Skinner's reinforcement theory, which states that human behavior can be shaped and changed through the provision of reinforcing stimuli. In the context of this study, these stimuli took the form of praise, symbolic rewards, and other positive forms of social support (Onitsha, 2024). Compared to negative reinforcement, such as punishment or threats, positive reinforcement has proven to be more effective because it can generate motivation from within the participants. When someone feels valued and receives recognition for the changes they have made, the desire to maintain those changes will grow naturally and independently of external pressure (Haythornthwaite, 2023). For example, one participant admitted to feeling more proud of herself when her mother began to show her trust and give her responsibilities at home. This feeling of being valued was far more influential than the threats of punishment that had previously been ineffective in changing her behavior.

The social conditions in Langkan Village also contributed significantly to the success of the reinforcement technique. As a close-knit community where everyone knows each other, changes in individual behavior are more easily recognized and appreciated by the surrounding environment. In some cases, neighbors and community leaders also gave positive comments or simply warm greetings to participants who began to change. Such social interactions reinforce the effect of reinforcement because they show that the changes made have a real impact and are valued by the community. This is in line with Corey's view, which emphasizes the importance of social support in counseling practice. According to Corey, the process of individual change cannot be separated from the social context in which the individual exists (Tehrani & Yamini, 2020). Therefore, the involvement of the social environment is an integral part of an effective intervention strategy.

However, this study also identified many challenges that warrant attention. One of them is the inconsistency of participants in attending counseling sessions. Some participants did not attend due to family activities, laziness, or a lack of initial understanding of the purpose of counseling. This shows that the initial motivation of participants plays an important role in determining the success of the intervention. To overcome this obstacle, counselors applied a more flexible approach, such as rescheduling sessions, conducting informal approaches outside of formal sessions, or inviting family members to provide additional encouragement (Okeke, 2021). In some cases, this approach succeeded in rebuilding participants' commitment to completing the counseling process. In addition, it was also found that the form of reinforcement used needed to be personalized according to the needs and characteristics of each participant. Not all participants responded well to the same form of reinforcement. For example, some participants were more motivated by verbal praise, while others felt more encouraged when given certain responsibilities or social roles. This shows that the effectiveness of reinforcement depends heavily on the extent to which counselors understand the psychological condition, social background,

and personal preferences of participants. Thus, reinforcement cannot be applied uniformly but must be tailored to the individual context and environment.

Overall, the findings of this study reinforce the belief that reinforcement techniques, especially positive reinforcement, are an effective and applicable approach in addressing antisocial behavior among adolescents. Consistent application, supported by a responsive social environment and strong therapeutic relationships, can create lasting behavioral change. This technique not only suppresses negative behavior but also fosters previously hidden positive potential. In Langkan Village, the application of these techniques has proven that behavioral approaches can be harmoniously combined with local values and community social strengths to achieve optimal results in adolescent behavior development. Therefore, the findings of this study are expected to serve as an important reference for counselors, educators, and policymakers in designing more effective and contextual interventions in the future.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that the application of reinforcement techniques in individual counselling is an effective strategy to reduce anti-social behaviour, particularly within the context of Langkan Village. The use of positive reinforcement, such as praise, social support, and symbolic rewards, was found to significantly decrease negative behaviours while simultaneously encouraging prosocial actions among participants. These included greater involvement in community activities, improved emotional regulation, and enhanced interpersonal relationships. Central to the success of this intervention were several key supporting factors. The consistency in delivering reinforcement played a vital role in ensuring that the behaviour change was sustained over time. Scheduled and regular reinforcement allowed participants to associate positive behaviour with rewarding outcomes. Moreover, the involvement of the family and local community proved crucial in reinforcing behavioural shifts. Acceptance, encouragement, and recognition from the community created a supportive environment that strengthened participants' motivation to change. The counsellor's engagement, marked by empathy, responsiveness, and trust-building, further enhanced the effectiveness of the intervention.

These findings align with Skinner's reinforcement theory, which posits that behaviour can be shaped and maintained through reinforcing stimuli. The intrinsic motivation built through positive reinforcement made it more sustainable than punishment-based approaches. The integration of behaviourist techniques with the social dynamics of the village environment proved to be a powerful approach in this context. Given these outcomes, the study recommends the adoption of reinforcement-based counselling programs in other rural areas or communities dealing with similar behavioural challenges. However, it emphasizes the importance of tailoring these interventions to the unique cultural, social, and logistical characteristics of each setting to maximize their relevance and effectiveness.

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