




The Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques on Academic Anxiety in Final Year Students

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) techniques on academic anxiety problems that occur in final year students. The object of this research is final year students who have academic anxiety problems. The method used in this study is a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach, where the researcher deepens the problem with the subject through various information about the factors that cause academic anxiety and then after therapy how the changes, so that it will be able to describe how the CBT technique can be implemented. Data collection is done by interviewing counselors. The results showed that the Cognitive Behavior Therapy technique could reduce final-year students' academic anxiety.

Article Information:

Received April 17, 2022

Revised June 4, 2022

Accepted June 16, 2022

Keywords: Final Year Students, Counseling, Academic Anxiety, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques.

INTRODUCTION

Studies have been conducted related to Cognitive Behavior Therapy. First, (Lorenzo-luaces et al., 2016) mention that CBT takes a mechanistic role in changing cognitive for depressive and anxiety disorders. Next, it was conducted by Wahidah & Adam (2019) who states that CBT can change self-confidence, negative emotions, and thoughts as well as adolescent self-esteem. Both Fatmawati et al., (2018) and (Purwanti et al., 2017). In his research on the phenomenon of decreased student motivation, he explained that the counseling technique of Cognitive Behavior Therapy with group counseling can increase student learning motivation. In addition, the research of Ayun & Wibowo (2020), explained that after being tested further with an experimental pretest-posttest control group model, it was found that there were

E-ISSN: 2798-3250

Published by: UIN Datokarama Palu

differences in the experiment with the group after receiving treatment on cognitive behavior. Then Fatimah et al., (2019), in a study revealed that the ability to control themselves in students who experience academic stress can be improved using CBT by providing treatment.

However, some previous researchers suggested several techniques for dealing with this academic anxiety problem. As done by Triana Dewi & Meiyutariningsih, (2021) revealed that the anxiety experienced by adolescents can be reduced by art therapy and family psychoeducation. Then Nabila & Naqiyah (2021), suggested that the Cognitive Restructuring technique can be one of the techniques that can be applied in overcoming the problem of academic anxiety. While Ningrum et al.,(2021), The research found that in addition to counseling techniques that can be applied to reduce academic anxiety, it turns out that internal factors, as well as environmental influences such as affection and high Islamic spiritual orientation, create a more positive self-perception.

From the explanation above, the researcher wants to convey that the Cognitive Behavior Therapy technique is widely applied and effective in dealing with mental health in the form of anxiety disorders and depression. Based on previous studies that use various techniques in dealing with cases of academic anxiety, the researcher wants to further review one of the counseling techniques, namely the Cognitive Behavior Therapy technique against academic anxiety experienced by final year students of universities in Indonesia context.

There are several reasonable factors for determining this topic. It sees how the issue of mental health of students and students is now one of the main problems in several countries, especially with the change in the learning system to online. One of these changes has an impact on students. Sourced from the journal of adolescent health 36, Qurnia (2021) surveyed 55 people. The respondents consisted of fourth-semester above who came from approximately 13 universities. The survey results show that 80% of students feel anxiety and depression. The survey shows that some final year students feel excessive anxiety about academic grades, they start overthinking because their friends are starting to graduate, and they are afraid and id if they get grades that are not optimal. According to Harpell and Andrews (in Nabila, 2021), testing tests anxiety from a cognitive perspective is anxious people lack self-confidence. They are preoccupied with negative thoughts, doubting their academic and intellectual abilities.

The problem of academic anxiety can be overcome, one of which is the Cognitive Behavior Therapy technique which emphasizes the psychotherapeutic approach used by counselors to help individuals in a positive direction. In this technique, a counselor plays a role in controlling disturbed emotional reactions, such as anxiety and depression by teaching them more effective ways to interpret their experiences.

Meanwhile, Bush revealed that Cognitive Behavior counseling is a combination of two approaches in psychotherapy, namely Cognitive Therapy and Behavior Therapy. Cognitive therapy focuses on thoughts, assumptions, and beliefs. Cognitive therapy facilitates individuals to learn to recognize and change errors in thinking or irrational thoughts into rational ones. While behavior therapy helps individuals to form new behaviors in solving problems, the Cognitive Behavior approach does not focus on the past life of the individual but focuses on current problems by not ignoring the past. Aaron T. Beck (in Ida, 2011) also defines CBT as a counseling approach designed to solve the counselee's current problems by restructuring cognitive and deviant behavior. The CBT approach is based on the formulation of cognitive, disruptive beliefs, and behavioral strategies. The hope of CBT is the emergence of distorted cognitive restructuring and belief systems to bring changes in emotions and behavior for the better.

Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling Techniques and Methods tend to use a structured program. Program steps such as this can include: 1) Creating a very close relationship with a working alliance between counselor and counselee. Explain the rationale for the treatment to be given. 2) Assess the problem. Identify, and measure the frequency, intensity, and

appropriateness of my male problems and cognition. 3) Set change targets. 4) Application of cognitive and behavioral (behavioral) techniques. 5) Monitoring progress, using a running assessment of the target behavior. 6) End and design a follow-up program to strengthen what is obtained. 7) Cognitive-behavioral counselors will use a variety of intervention techniques to gain agreement on the target behavior with the client. The techniques commonly used are: 1) Challenging irrational beliefs. 2) Reframing the issue; for example, accepting internal emotional states as attractive rather than frightening. 3) Repeating the use of various self-statements in role-playing with the counselor. 4) Trying to use different self-statements in real situations. 5) Measuring feelings; for example, by placing current feelings of anxiety on a scale of 0-100. 6) Stopping thoughts. 7) Systematic desensitization. It replaced fear and anxiety responses with learned relaxation responses. The counselor takes the client through the hierarchical levels of the situation to eliminate fear. 8) Social skills training or certification. 9) Assignment of homework. Practice new behavioral and cognitive strategies between therapy sessions. 10) In vivo exposure. Entering the most frightening situations accompanied by a counselor (John Mcleod, 2006). The counselor's role is to motivate the client (the counselee) to use cognitive-behavioral techniques to deal with the situation.

The advantage of this technique for the problems we take is that first with a cognitive approach, a person can determine how they feel and how they will behave. This is evident from the characteristics of clients who are successful with a cognitive approach, namely having average or above-average intelligence; moderate or severe functional distress; having the ability to identify feelings and thoughts; not in a state of crisis, psychotic, or seriously disturbed by the problem; have adequate behavioral skills or responses; have the ability to process information visually or auditory; have an analytical activity orientation (Mulyadi, 2015).

The hope of CBT is the emergence of distorted cognitive restructuring and belief systems to bring changes in emotions and behavior for the better. From the explanations of these problems, the researcher decided that The Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques on Academic Anxiety in Final Year Students was the focus of this research.

METHODOLOGY

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative with a case study approach (case study). Case study research is a form of qualitative research based on human understanding and behavior based on human opinion (Polit & Beck, 2004). Bimo Walgito (2010), explained that the case study method is a method that aims to study and investigate an event or phenomenon regarding an individual, such as the life history of someone who is the object of research.

The objects studied in this study were final year students who had academic anxiety problems. Data collection and implementation were done through interviews with informants. Informants in this study are psychologists who are also lecturers and consultants at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, The informant has done counseling with final year students who have problems with their academics.

As for the stages that we use in collecting data, the researcher will make a research question related to academic anxiety among final year students, then the researcher will investigate the object being studied by interviewing the consultant who handles the case, interviews with informants were conducted for 60 minutes. After that, the researcher will collect or process the data from the interview. Data processing is obtained by categorizing, comparing, and discussing, the source of the informant and the cases in the field. then, the researcher concludes the study. Formulation of conclusions which includes activities of interpretation and integration of findings into the building of previous knowledge.

RESULT

Academic anxiety is an impulse of thoughts and feelings in individuals that contains tension and fear of future dangers or threats, resulting in disruption of thought patterns, physical responses, and behavior as a result of pressure in academic situations. Bandura (in Prawitasari 2012) explains that anxiety triggered by a lack of confidence in one's ability to cope with academic tasks is called academic anxiety. Furthermore, Pekrun (2006) explains that anxiety in students arises because students' perspectives on academic activities are negative (failure) and students' control beliefs are at a medium or moderate level. In other words, students will feel anxious if they feel that their learning outcomes do not lead to a certain level of success and the perspective of control belief is neither high nor low. In the view of Holmes (in Eru, 2018) anxiety can be observed from mood disorders (feelings). Someone who experiences anxiety and feels anxious, restless, afraid, tense, nervous, and insecure, can be interpreted as having anxiety affecting academic activities in students facing comprehensive exams.

Anxiety can also interfere with individual cognitive work. Someone who feels anxious will continue to worry about all kinds of problems that may occur so that the individual will find it difficult to concentrate or make decisions, get confused, and becomes difficult to remember things. Based on the facts in the case studies that we studied, academic anxiety experienced by final students usually appears marked by declining academic grades, lack of motivation in learning, avoiding final assignments that should be a big responsibility, and they even tend to be repressive when they relate to something for which he is responsible. According to Tresna (2011), manifestations of anxiety during exams manifest as collaboration and a combination of three uncontrollable aspects within the individual, namely: (a) Cognitive manifestations, which are manifested in the form of tension in the minds of students, thus making students difficult to concentrate, confused in answering questions and experiencing mental blocking. (b) Affective Manifestations, which are manifested in unpleasant feelings such as worry, fear, and excessive anxiety. (c) Uncontrolled motor behavior, which is manifested in erratic movements such as shaking.

Referring to the case studies that we studied, we also get the results that the factors that influence academic anxiety in final year students include internal factors and external factors. On internal factors, academic anxiety is usually influenced by a lack of self-confidence and excessive negative thoughts that they will not be able to complete their assignments. Then on external factors, academic anxiety usually arises due to a lack of support, both from the family environment and the academic environment itself. In addition, there is also a factor of demands from parents that they must be able to graduate in a fast period, even though the potential ability of each child must be different. This also causes students to feel pressure over the expectations of their parents imposed on them.

In the case study that we examined, we got information that students who experience academic anxiety are students who are unable to control the pressure on their minds in actualizing what they have to do. This anxiety appears as a form of feeling fear, worry, and restlessness in him. They feel pressured by the responsibilities that must be fulfilled as final-year students. These pressures make students tend to be confused and misperceptions occur, causing overwhelm. This also refers to Rehman's (2016) theory which explains that students who experience academic anxiety may have disturbing thoughts and prevent them from thinking logically and clearly. This means that when students feel anxious, it can interfere with their concentration in learning such as lowering their memory and interfering with their ability to relate one thing to another. Meanwhile, the various tasks, roles, and functions that are simultaneously carried by students with the accompanying conditions and demands increasingly position students as individuals who are prone to stress or anxiety, this is deepened by the psychological condition of students who are in the developmental stage of

late adolescence and will enter early adulthood. At this late adolescence, students are required to leave childhood and switch to adult behavior patterns, this change alone does not just happen. The feeling of helplessness is generally experienced by students, especially those who will face a final project such as a thesis. It is different if students have high self-confidence; students do not hesitate, are not afraid, and are optimistic about facing the thesis.

Then refer to the counseling stage. At first, students will be asked to complain about what factors make academic anxiety appear in them. In this stage, a counselor must be able to listen actively and be able to identify problems that affect academic anxiety. Active listening means that the counselor must attentively listen to what the speaker or interlocutor is saying. Its purpose is to increase mutual understanding and enable people to draw in information that is not explicitly expressed through speech. Safaria (Sarianne, 2008) explains that active listening is the process of sending back to the speaker according to what the speaker intended, both in terms of content and feelings. Active listening involves an empathetic attitude from the listener. That is, in this case also a counselor must be able to analyze every problem complained of by the client (student). The results of the analysis are then identified by the counselor, where at this stage the counselor gives directions to the client (student) so that the negative control belief changes to a positive mindset. Usually, students who have academic anxiety, feel excessive fear and anxiety when faced with tasks that should be their responsibility. For example, some always run when asked by their supervisor about their final assignment and even disappear for several months to avoid the things they are worried about.

By using the Shaping technique, the Counselor then looks for the root cause of the student's problems. According to Samsara (2020) that the cause of a person experiencing anxiety can be due to experiences when children or in the past, life and daily habits, genetics, diet, drugs, or it could be due to health and mental disorders. The counselor tries to multiply the students' beliefs about a problem and then provides reinforcement every time the expected behavior appears. Some clients indicate that their anxiety stems from their traumatic experiences. As one client said, "I was physically ridiculed and humiliated when I was in high school. Those were very traumatic times for me and sometimes I still feel traumatized when I think about it."

After knowing the root of the problem, the counselor, using systematic desensitization, helps students to overcome the anxiety of a particular situation, the client is asked to describe the situation that causes the most anxiety. Then the client must make a sequence of situations that cause the most anxiety and which do not cause anxiety. The counselor teaches the client to relax physically and mentally. In addition, these clients or students are given homework depending on the situation of their academic anxiety problems at that time. Counselors usually ask clients to keep a diary, of how he is doing and dealing with anxiety problems, especially in their academic field. The counselor also does think stopping by asking the client to imagine a situation that causes anxiety, then being asked verbally, and when the client experiences or is overcome by thoughts that cause anxiety, the client is asked to stop (Mulyadi, 2015). Counselors see how the actions taken by clients in dealing with problems that cause anxiety. Taking any action at first will make a person more anxious. Things can cause anxiety, but when one confronts how anxiety shapes a person it can be the first step in breaking the vicious cycle of fear and insecurity.

The counselor then recommends how the client can deal with his anxiety. In dealing with anxiety, a person can do many ways to reduce his anxiety, such as talking to someone he can trust, trying breathing exercises, diverting attention, listening to music, and reassuring himself, it can also be by exercising, or can keep a diary.

In the next session, the counselor performs Extinction. At this stage, the counselor will see the progress of the client from the results of the report or diary and then eliminate the behavior. The results show some client actions such as running away from problems when

feeling depressed, and diverting themselves from problems while those who take action try to fight. Like animals, humans have evolved to protect themselves from threats of danger or life-threatening situations. When a person feels under threat, his body will release hormones, such as adrenaline or cortisol, which will help physicians to prepare whether he will fight with danger or run away from the threat. Then when it feels the danger has passed, the body will release other hormones that help the muscles to relax, which may cause the person to tremble. This is called the 'fight or flight response that happens automatically in the body and we don't have enough control over it (Samsara, 2020). From there the counselor will try to do activity training for the client, distinguishing the level of aggressive, passive, and assertive behavior. The goal is for clients to learn to behave assertively. According to Jay (in Yasdiananda, 2013), assertive behavior is the ability to communicate what we want honestly, not hurting other people and hurting ourselves and we get what we want.

The counselor tries to replace the wrong thoughts about himself with positive thoughts. Using Skinner's theory, one of which is flooding, the counselor tries to flood the client with situations or causes that cause anxiety and unwanted behavior, the client is asked to persist in a condition until the client realizes that something he is worried about is not happening (Dr. Hidayat, 2011). In his book, Dr. Hidayat said that the impact of flooding was extraordinary. People with a phobia of heights can be cured once by forcing them to take elevators and walk on the roofs of high-rise buildings. This is also done during the counseling session and is proven after seeing the results of the client's response after the counseling session. The result is that there is a change in the behavior of the client in dealing with his academic anxiety. This can be seen from the client's response to the counselor such as good feedback obtained from the client in the form of gratitude, the client's acknowledgment when asked again about his decreasing anxiety, as well as the perspective or mindset that is different from a problem. So it can be said that the Cognitive Behavior Therapy technique is effective in reducing academic anxiety in final year students.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of data collection, data analysis, and the discussion that has been described, it can be concluded that the Cognitive Behavior Therapy technique is effective in reducing academic anxiety in final year students. The effectiveness of this CBT technique can be seen from the responses given by students to the counselor, such as good feedback obtained from clients in the form of gratitude, client's acknowledgment when asked again about his decreasing anxiety, as well as different ways of seeing or thinking about a problem.

Counselors can provide counseling services with a CBT approach with active listening techniques to help students restore affective, cognitive, and behavioral functions to become adaptive again, so that final year students can optimize their potential.

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