

The Effectiveness of Supportive Group Therapy in Reducing Anxiety of Bullying Victims at Smp X Yogyakarta Indonesia

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Abstract: This study aims to determine the effectiveness of supportive group therapy to reduce students' anxiety at SMP X in Yogyakarta. The research subjects in this study were 6 people of 13-14-year-old junior high school students with moderate to high anxiety levels. Anxiety level was measured by using the DASS 42 scale (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale). The research used was experimental research with one group pre-test and post-test design. The data analysis used was the Wilcoxon technique with the help of the statistical program SPSS 16.0. The result shows that the Z value count = -2.214 with $p = 0.027$ ($p < 0.05$) so that there is a significant decrease in anxiety before and after being given therapy. Thus, it can be concluded that supportive group therapy can be one of the interventions to reduce the anxiety of bullying victims.

Keywords: supportive group therapy, anxiety, students

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a crucial stage of human development as a basis for obtaining good health. Adolescence is defined by Hurlock (2010) as a transitional period where individuals experience a change from childhood to adulthood both physically and psychologically. According to (WHO, 2021), adolescents are individuals in the range of 10-19 years old. Adolescence is divided into 3 phases, namely: pre-adolescence (11 / 12-13 / 14 years), early adolescence (13 / 14-17 years), and late adolescence (17-20 years). In the early adolescence phase, physical changes occur very rapidly, causing emotional imbalance and instability in many aspects (Sobur, 2011). The experience of emotional imbalance will trigger problems in everyday life. Adolescents are required to be able to adapt to environmental conditions. However, in reality, adolescents still have difficulty in solving the problem. Conflicts that are not being resolved properly will affect adolescent development and have negative effects like mental-emotional problems (IDAI, 2010). Emotional problems in adolescents can be in the form of symptoms of emotional disturbance, frustration, internal or external conflicts, causing adolescents to show deviant behaviour such as: skipping school, brawls, criminal acts, consuming drugs and alcohol, smoking, and free sex (Azmi, 2015).

Start from those problems the counselling teacher told the researcher that at SMP X Yogyakarta, there were quite a several students who had a problem such as having less focus on their lesson, skipping school, smoking, and ruining their academic accomplishment. The counselling teacher recommends three classes that are considered to have the most students with problems. Then, the researcher conducted an initial screening by asking each student to write down the problems experienced on a sheet of paper, followed by conducting individual observations and interviews, FGD (focused group discussion), and filling in the pre-test scale using the DASS 42 scale (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale). Based on the results of the initial screening, observation, interviews, FGD, and pre-test, it is found that six students had similar problems called bullying. Six students who experienced bullying had symptoms of anxiety strengthened by the results of the achievement. It is also indicated that the anxiety experienced by the participants was in the moderate to severe category.

Bullying is a form of violent behaviour in which there is a physical or psychological force on a person or group of people who are "weaker" by a person or group of people. This behaviour occurs repeatedly or continuously (Zakiah, Fedryansyah & Gutama, 2018). According to Sripurwaningsih (2017), the form of bullying is divided into two, namely physical and non-physical bullying. Physical bullying is more about direct contact like hitting. While non-physical bullying is in a form of threatening, mocking, insulting, and isolating which can hurt the victim's psychological condition if it happens continuously.

From 2011 to 2019, 37,381 reports were submitted to the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI). Reported cases of bullying in education and social media reached 2,473 cases (Republika Merdeka, 2021). Director of UNICEF Java Island Representative, Arie Rukmantara said that in the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), bullying cases are still common, even the figure reaches 21%. These bullying cases were experienced by children of 13-17 years old (Republika.co.id, 2021). According to Wiyani (2012), bullying brings a negative impact on victims. They will have various kinds of psychological disorders such as feeling uncomfortable, afraid, inferior, worthless, having poor self-adjustment, withdrawing, fear of coming to school, and decreasing academic achievement due to concentration loss while studying.

In this case, participants who got bullied experienced psychological problems in the form of anxiety. Anxiety is an emotion characterized by repeated feelings of tension and worry. The possibilities of physical symptoms are sweating, shaking, dizziness, faster heart rate, and avoidance behaviour (APA, 2021).

One of the therapies that can overcome anxiety is supportive therapy. This is under the opinion of Hellerstein, Pinsker, Rosenthal & Klee, (2014) that supportive therapy can reduce anxiety. Supportive therapy is part of psychotherapy that can be given to clients individually or in groups to help self-evaluate, find new perspectives, and independently determine attitudes towards the future (Palmer, 2011). In this case, the intervention technique used is supportive group therapy because therapy is administered in a group setting. Supportive group therapy is a collection of two or more people who have the same problem. They share their experiences to support each other, to encourage the potential of group members, and to increase their self-confidence so that they can overcome stress-related problems in life that focus on dysfunction of thoughts, feelings, and behaviours (Battaglia, 2007). The main goal of supportive group therapy is the achievement of effective coping skills against the problems experienced. The existence of groups that have the same problems can provide opportunities for individuals in the group to learn from each other and strengthen each other (Corey, 2010). Supportive group therapy facilitates each group member to be able to share information and experiences, and have the same opportunity to convey complaints that have been or are being faced as a form of catharsis (Brabender, Fallon, & Smollar, 2004). There are previous studies that support the effectiveness of supportive group therapy to reduce anxiety. Kissane's (2007) study proved that supportive group therapy was able to increase coping and reduce the anxiety of patients with cancer. Dewi's (2011) research proves that supportive group therapy can reduce the burden and anxiety level by taking care of mentally disabled children. Seeing the phenomenon and the importance of supportive group therapy, researchers are interested in examining the effectiveness of supportive group therapy to reduce students' anxiety as victims of bullying.

2. Method

Research Design

This research conducted using an experimental method called one group pre-test post-test design. The method used one group as a sample, where a group of subjects was given treatment within a certain period. Measurements were made before and after being given treatment. The difference between the initial measurement results and the final measurement results is the effect of the treatment given. This is following the opinion of Sugiyono (2013) where the results of treatment are known to be more accurate by comparing the conditions before being given treatment.

Research Subject

The subjects in this study were six students of SMP X in Yogyakarta, aged 13-14 years old, male and female, with moderate to high anxiety levels. Participants are selected based on recommendations from the counseling teacher. The counseling teacher recommends three classes that are considered to have the most students with academic problems. The researcher then conducted an initial screening by asking each student in three classes to write down the problems experienced on a piece of paper. Based on the results of the initial screening, the data obtained shows eleven students had problems at school related to bullying.

The researcher also conducted observations and individual interviews to find out more in-depth problems with eleven students. Problems were found with indications of anxiety, stress, and depression so that further screening was conducted in the form of a pre-test by using the DASS 42 measuring instrument. Based on the results of the pre-test, it was found that 6 out of 11 students had similar problems that they experience anxiety due to bullying cases. Six students were known to have moderate to high anxiety levels. Furthermore, prospective participants are given an informed consent sheet as a form of agreement that the prospective participant is willing to take part in the therapy process. The informed consent form was signed by the parents of each candidate because the participant's age was less than 18 years old.

Data Collection Method

The data collection method in this study used the DASS 42 scale (Depression Anxiety Stress Scale). DASS is a psychological measurement tool developed by Lovibond in 1995 to reveal the psychological state of an individual. DASS consists of 42 items with choices answers that is 0 (zero) for those who unsuitable to one's condition, score 1 for suitable but sometimes, score 2 suitable and quite often, and score 3 for very suitable and very frequent. (Basha & Kaya, 2016). DASS has been tested in several studies in Indonesia and it is known to be reliable and has a Cronbach's coefficient $\alpha = 0.9483$ (Lovibond, 1995).

Intervention Procedure

The assessment result that has been conducted in the form of observations, interviews, and FGD (Focused Group Discussion) show that three participants received unpleasant treatment in the form of physical insults that were continuously done by their classmates. This physical humiliation was also committed by another friend until it became a nickname for the subject. One participant admitted to receiving physical humiliation, harsh treatment, and ostracism from several friends in class and outside the classroom. Meanwhile, the other two participants received harsh treatment on social media or directly by their classmates. The bullying experienced by the participants caused problems related to anxiety, such as, 1) There was a physical reaction that appeared in the form of a faster heartbeat, sweaty hands and trembling when going to school or even doing activities at school, 2) Concentration was disturbed while attending the class at school, 3) Withdrawing from the environment and limiting interactions, 4) Not having confidence so they tend to be passive when attending the classes, 5) Having a fear of rejection and criticism from others, 6) having a negative view of oneself. All those complaints experienced by members of the group are considered as a sign of anxiety. It is suitable with the symptoms of anxiety according to (Nevid, Spencer & Greene, 2005), that is 1) physical symptoms: restlessness, trembling, difficulty breathing, sweating, heart beating fast, weak, irritable and easily offended. 2) Behavioural symptoms: avoidance, dependence on others. 3) Cognitive symptoms: worrying about something excessively, fear of something in the future, difficulty concentrating, and inability to solve problems.

One of the intervention techniques that can overcome anxiety is supportive therapy. Supportive therapy is a part of psychotherapy used in community-based psychiatry. Supportive therapy generally uses a psychodynamic approach to understand changes in individuals (Viederman, 2008). According to Rockland (1993), supportive therapy aims to improve individual abilities both coping skills, decision making, and reducing distress. The implementation of supportive therapy in this study consisted of 5 meetings with various sessions at each meeting. Details of activities in each meeting can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Intervention Activities

Meeting	Session	Duration	Activity	Procedure	Objective
1	I	10''	Opening	Building Rapport	To establish familiarity among the participants so that they feel comfortable when interacting within the groups.
	II	20''	Anxiety Psychoeducation	Lecture	To get the participants understand the definition, symptoms, causes and ways to deal with anxiety.
	III	20''	Supportive Therapy Psychoeducation	Lecture	To get the participants know and understand more about the benefits of supportive therapy to reduce anxiety.
	IV	10''	Question and Answer	Discussion	To find out the participants' understanding of the material that has been delivered.
2	I	40''	Recognizing and expressing participants' feelings	The participants expressed their hidden feelings.	To let the participants express their hidden feelings.
				Participants were pleased to identify positive and negative emotions they have been felt.	To get the participant more aware of negative emotions pent up so far causing the discomfort.
	II	10''	Question and Answer	Discussion	To lead the participants share their experiences after realizing the

Meeting	Session	Duration	Activity	Procedure	Objective
					emotions they feel and realize the strengths they have.
3	I	40''	Recognizing strengths and weaknesses	The participants were asked to write down their strengths and weaknesses. The researchers treated the participants using rationalizing and reframing techniques.	To foster the participants' confidence to be more aware that regardless of the problems they face, they still have their strengths. To change the participants' views to be more positive, able to understand and accept their shortcomings.
	II	10''	Question and Answer	Discussion	Participants were asked to express their feelings after doing therapy.
4	I	40''	Sharing experiences of "bullying" and the problem solving	The participants revealed their experiences related to bullying and how they solve it. The researchers treated participants using reassurance and Advice and teaching techniques in supportive therapy.	To facilitate the participants with lesson-learned from others' experiences. To generate the participants' internal motivation. To convince the participants that every problem has its solution and that they are not alone of having that kind of problem. To help the participants find more adaptive coping.
	II	10''	Question and Answer	Discussion	Participants were asked to express their feelings after doing therapy.
5	I	30''	Follow up & post-test	Asking how the participants feel after doing the therapy and the obstacles occurring during the therapy process.	To know the effectiveness level of supportive therapy and the obstacles experienced during the therapy process.
	II	30''	Motivational Message	The participants were asked to give positive suggestions to each other.	To increase their motivation and feel mutually reinforce one another.

3. The Results

This research used a non-parametric statistical analysis to test the hypothesis, namely the Wilcoxon Signed Rank which was used to see the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in determining the outcome of the intervention. According to Sugiono (2017), the Wilcoxon signed rank test is a non-parametric test to analyse the significance of the difference between two paired data on an ordinal scale but not normally distributed. The data analysis program used in this study was IBM SPSS Statistics 16 for windows.

Table 2. The Descriptive Statistical Results

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min	Max
PRE-TEST	6	47.50	3.674	43	53
POST-TEST	6	38.67	5.203	30	44

Based on the results of the participants' pre-test, the highest score was 53 and the lowest was 43 with an average of 47.50. Based on the post-test results, the highest score was 44 and the lowest score was 30 with an average of 38.67. The difference in the average value between the pre-test and post-test indicates the differential level of anxiety in the participants after being given treatment.

Table 3. The Statistical Test Results

	POST-TEST – PRE-TEST
Z	-2.214
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.027

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon test in this results, it shows that the Z score during the pre-test and post-test is -2.214 with a significance of $p = 0.027$ ($p, 0.05$) on the anxiety scale. This shows that there is a significant difference between the anxiety level experienced by the participants before and after following the intervention process.

4. The Discussion

The results of group therapy showing a decrease in anxiety experienced by participants after being given supportive therapy is in accordance with Battaglia's (2007) explanation explaining that supportive group therapy is an effective method for overcoming various psychiatric problems and medical conditions including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, depression, PTSD, personality disorder, substance abuse, and anxiety.

Supportive group therapy is known to have made positive changes for participants. Participants revealed that they felt more comfortable after doing catharsis by expressing their feelings to each other. The participants were given the opportunity to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Then, the researcher treated the participants using rationalizing and reframing techniques. The participants were also given reinforcement and invited to see the other side of the problem as well as were invited to realize that they will always have potentials and strengths, regardless of their weaknesses. The potentials each individual has are different so that participants were invited to focus on developing their potential. Next, participants shared their experiences of bullying and how they resolved it. The researchers treated participants using reassurance and Advice and teaching techniques in supportive therapy by providing reinforcement to participants and giving the view that the difficulties experienced are not only experienced by them. Participants were given directions to respond to problems more adaptively, such as learning not to harbour problems and asking for help from teachers and parents.

In supportive therapy, the therapist plays an important role in establishing good relationships with clients so that clients feel comfortable and the results of therapy are more effective. This is in accordance with Mutiara's opinion (2017) saying that supportive therapy helps clients live better by providing support. Therapists do not ask clients to change, but therapists assist clients to reflect on their life situations. After doing supportive therapy the participants were more confident and able to strengthen each other. The participants have a better view of them, are more optimistic and have more adaptive coping in addressing their problems, such as not harbouring their feelings and learning to share their problems with their teachers or parents. This is in line with Mutiara's opinion (2017), where supportive therapy can improve individual adaptation, affect emotional stability, increase self-esteem and help overcome the problems at hand.

The influence of supportive group therapy on anxiety is supported by the results of research by Nurcahyani, Dewi & Rondhianto (2016) which prove that supportive group therapy can affect anxiety in clients after flash flood disasters. Research by Widiyanti, Mustikasari & Waluyo (2017) proves that supportive group therapy can reduce anxiety among adolescents assisted under detention centers and prisons. Puspitasari's research (2016) showed the effectiveness of support group therapy which affected the reduction of anxiety in adolescents who experienced pregnancy outside of marriage. Dewi's (2011) research showed that supportive group therapy affects the burden and level of family anxiety in caring for mentally retarded children in special schools in Banyumas Regency.

5. The Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded that the intervention in the form of supportive group therapy can reduce anxiety experienced by bullying victims at SMP X in Yogyakarta. Based on quantitative and qualitative data obtained from records of the process during therapy, the results of discussion and follow-up, it is known that the majority of participants stated that there were positive changes during therapy. Seeing the positive effect of the therapy given, it is recommended that this therapy can continue to be implemented. The school can work with psychologists to organize mentoring programs for students who have psychological problems. In addition, the school can also work with related parents to provide assistance and support for the students so that they feel comfortable expressing their problems. Participants are also expected to be able to take advantage of the existing relationships within the group as a place to share and support one another. Suggestions for future researchers who want to use supportive group therapy are expected to be able to provide therapy to high school students or adults with similar or other psychological problems.

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