

Attribution Retraining Group Counseling Technique to Reduce Student's Learned Helplessness Behavior

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the impact of attribution retraining group counseling technique on student's learned helplessness. One-group pretest-posttest design was used in this study involving a total of 5 students as participants. The results of paired t-test showed that the student learned helplessness level can decreased at posttest (39.58%) than at assesment pre test (68.33%; $t = 7.14$, $p < 0.01$). Further, this study was focused to discuss the possibility of implementing attribution retraining in overcoming the problem of student's learned helplessness behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

Consciously or subconsciously, people learn along their life, anywhere and anytime. This process enables them to develop all their potential to encounter any challenge of life. However, some people face difficulties in learning. Learning difficulty is a gap between reality and individual expectation during the learning process (Sunawan, 2009). In academical context, it could be off task behavior, slow learner, procrastination, underachievement, learned helplessness, amotivation, and so on (Aulia, 2012).

One of learning difficulties experienced by the students is learned helplessness, a maladaptive belief that their effort will be useless and failure will always be happen. Gordon & Gordon (2006) stated that learned helplessness develops gradually through various events experienced by the individuals. For students, learned helplessness comes up after failure happens repeatedly and makes then them develop a maladaptive belief on their effort and abilities. Learned helplessness is getting strong when students receive high academical demands from the school and parents.

Aulia (2012) found that 32 held back student in SMA Bhineka Patebon encountered learned helplessness. In line with it, Laksmi, Antari, & Dantes (2014) stated that 4 of 26 student at SMAN 3 Singaraja experienced a high level of learned helplessness. Students with learned helplessness were characterized by (a) rejecting to do task, (b) being late to do and submit tasks, (c) being passive during lessons, (d) lacking of interest and willingness to comply lesson, (e) ignoring any task, (f) taking note lazily, and (g) playing truant (Aulia, 2012).

Learned helplessness which is not handled immediately will make students expand ineffective learning strategy and give up in overcoming their problem. That is because student with learned helplessness feel helpless or unable to do anything to achieve their goals (Sunawan, 2005). The impact of learned helplessness on students' academic success is further explained by Sorenti, et al. (2014) that

learned helplessness has a significant effect to the decreasing of some learning variables such as self efficacy, self representation, attribution style, information acceptance process, motivation, anxiety, etc.

Gordon & Gordon (2006) stated that an effective way to overcome learned helplessness is by changing any destructive thought arising when students fail. To change maladaptive thoughts can be done by using attribution retraining techniques.

Attribution retraining techniques are techniques that teach individuals to associate their failures with lack of effort (Koh, 2008). Various studies have shown that attribution retraining techniques are effective in improving performance, motivation, self esteem, and reducing aggressive behavior and individual stereotyped thought as well (Fulk, 1996; Orbach, Singer, & Murphey, 1997; Mc. Dowell, 2009; Hall, et al. 2011; Hudley, et al. 1998; Carlyon, 1997; Stewart, et al. 2010).

The implementation of these attribution retraining techniques to reduce students' learned helplessness is done by modifying the attribution retraining techniques into group counseling. Crespi (2009) described group counseling as a group intervention to fulfill students' psychological needs such as skill development, problem solving, and expansion of adoptive attitude. The applied group counseling is cognitive behavior therapy group counseling.

Cognitive behavior therapy group counseling is chosen because attribution retraining, learned helplessness, and cognitive behavior therapy are linked to cognitive process. It is explained by Valas (2010) that learned helplessness concept focused on cognitive process and attribution theory is a part of cognitive theory. Moreover, Mastur, Sugiharto, & Sukiman (2012) said that cognitive behavior therapy is a counseling approach which focus on cognitive. The effectiveness of cognitive behavior therapy group counseling in overcoming any kind of psychological problems has been proven by some researcher (Ralasari, 2015; Muwakhidah & Pravesti, 2017; Amilin & Lukitaningsih, 2014; Dewi, Atmoko, & Triyono 2016).

This study is conducted to determine the effectiveness of attribution retraining group counseling technique to reduce students' learned helplessness behavior. The result of this study expected to help school counselors in reducing learned helplessness behavior since similar studies are rarely done in Indonesia.

METHODS

The methods used in this study was one-group pretest-posttest design involving one experimental group consisting of junior high school students. This design was started by giving pretest followed by the implementing intervention which was attribution retraining group counseling technique in eight meetings (1 x 40 - 60 minutes), and lastly by giving posttest.

The participants of the study were chosen by using purposive sampling to the eight graders of Junior High School with high tendency of learned helplessness. Participation to the study was voluntary, and 5 female students were chosen. The learned helplessness scale developed by Sorenti, et al. (2014) was modified and applied in this study. The validation test of the scale showed that 12 items of students' learned helplessness scale were valid ($r_{xy} = 0.301-0.508$) with the alpha coefficient 0.711.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of pre intervention identification in SMPN 1 Kalitidu showed 2.25% students were in high category, 92.13% were in medium category, and 5.62% were in low category. Based on the data, 2 student with high category and 3 student with medium category were taken to be participants. The average score of participants pretest was 68.33%.

The results of the effectiveness test of group counseling that has been tested can be seen on table 1. Based on the paired sample t-test conducted on the pretest and posttest data showed that the result of the posttest ($M = 19.00$, $SD = 3.742$) was significantly lower than the pretest result ($M = 32.80$, $SD = 0.837$; $t_{(4)} = 7.136$ $p = < 0.01$). This findings was in line with the

prediction of the first hypothesis that attribution retraining group counseling technique is effective in reducing the learned helplessness behavior of SMPN 1 Kalitidu students.

Table 1 also showed that aspect of maladaptive thought of effort and ability and degradation of motivation and willingness had a positive impact on changing thinking and motivations' participants about failure. It suited with Mc Dowell (2009) study that attribution retraining is effective increasing students' motivation. It is because during the group counseling process, participant have to realize about maladaptive thoughts over the failure, understand the impact of the thoughts to their actions and feeling, and to develop an effort attribution.

Table 1. The Effectiveness Results of Attribution Retraining Group Counseling Technique

Aspect	Pretest		Posttest		$t_{(4)}$	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Maladaptive thought of effort and ability	11.00	2	6.20	0.45	4.95	< 0.01
Degradation of motivation and willingness	10.00	1.23	5.60	1.34	8.63	< 0.01
Degradation of emotional control	11.40	0.55	7.20	2.24	3.94	< 0.05
Learned helplessness	32.80	32.80	0.84	19.00	3.74	7.14

Sunawan, Dwi, & Anni (2012) stated that effort attribution will help student spreading a thought that their failure and achievement depend on their effort. With expanding of effort attribution, the participant will be encouraged to make an assumption that the key of success is an effort itself.

This new assumption or belief lead student with learned helplessness to develop more adaptive attribution so that their motivation and performance can improve. As mentioned by Hall, et al. (2011) that attribution retraining can improve self-esteem and students' performance. Moreover, this study supports Sunawan (2005) that learned helplessness can be reduced by providing successful experiences, consistent feedback, persuasion, and training in developing appropriate attribution of success.

CONCLUSION

This study have an aim to test the effectivity of attribution retraining group counseling techniques to decrease learned helplessness. The result showed that those technique is able to deliver a positive impact towards learned helplessness behavior.

Then, school counselors are expected to understand the concept of attribution retraining group counseling technique and apply it. Then, the next researcher are expected to do another intervention test to inigate learned helplessness behavior, do the test of attribution retraining group counseling technique with another different problem, and compare between control group (with intervention or without).

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