

## Improving Control Beliefs and Reducing Academic Burnout Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Group Counseling With Cognitive Restructuring Technique

Muttakhidatul Hikmah<sup>1✉</sup>, Muhammad Japar<sup>2</sup>, Sunawan Sunawan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 2 Cilacap, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Muhammadiyah Magelang, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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### Abstract

This study aimed to find out whether cognitive behavior therapy group counseling was effective to improve control beliefs and reduce students' academic burnout. This study was experimental research with randomized pretest – posttest control group design. 28 of 427 selected students be the subjects of this study and were divided into 4 groups, including 2 experimental groups and 2 control groups. Manucova analysis and Wilcoxon test were used to analyzed the data of this study. Eventually, the results of this study informed that cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique was effective to improve control beliefs ( $F(1,23) = 14.335, p < 0.05$ ) and reduce academic burnout ( $F(1,23) = 556.495, p < 0.05$ ). In other words, this study successfully generalized the effect of cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling service with cognitive restructuring technique in improving control beliefs ability and reducing academic burnout.

✉ Correspondence address:

Jl. KH. Sufyan Tsauri, Cibeunying, Majenang, Cigaru, Cibeunying, Kec.

Majenang, Kabupaten Cilacap, Jawa Tengah 53257

E-mail: [muttak.idha@yahoo.com](mailto:muttak.idha@yahoo.com)

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## INTRODUCTION

Burnout is a sort of phenomena occurs due to physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion because of overloaded works, lack of self-control and social support, and less positive self-concept (Maslach et al., 2001). Additionally, burnout also happens in learning activities or called as academic burnout. According to Zhang and Chan as cited in Mudjtahid (2017), burnout is realized by feeling tired due to study demands, having a cynical feeling and being detached or staying away from school, and feeling inadequate as a student. Students with academic burnout tend to be extremely bored to perform learning activities. Consequently, it indirectly affects their academic quality, such as low learning motivation, extreme laziness, lack of attention to lessons and academic tasks, and low motivation to get achievement. Besides, it decreases students' confidence and leads to negative reactions, for example being angry, irritable, insomnia, indifference, etc. (Agustin, 2010). Afterwards, this condition will improve students' indiscipline and amoral behavior. Therefore, it is substantial to prevent students from academic burnout in order to improve learning effectiveness and achieve optimal development.

Owing to the negative impacts of academic burnout, students with this condition must be immediately addressed. Counselor as a part of educators should be able to provide guiding or counseling service to help students avoid or reduce academic burnout. In the end, students are expected to be more comfortable in learning and more confident, have motivation to get achievement, achieve optimal academic achievement, and have more stable physical and psychological condition.

Regarding these circumstances, previous studies have been conducted to analyze academic burnout. Agustin (2010) revealed that the main cause of academic burnout is personal characteristics and emotional involvement with learning environment. Personal characteristics

include various statements which are generally categorized into low self-efficacy and negative self-concept; as Ariani (2017) confirms that the main cause of academic burnout is self-efficacy and motivation. The results of both studies are in line with Khairani (2015) that academic burnout is exhaustion due to over academic load to complete.

On the other hand, Deardoff et al. (2003) say that academic stress and depression, including burnout are caused by control beliefs and several types of depressive symptoms. Apparently, stress can reduce individual self-control, so control beliefs cannot be maximally and properly function. Beliefs in control towards situational changes and beliefs in ability to adapt to uncontrolled stressor are structures of beliefs system that complement in reducing depression. In such a way, if control beliefs do not properly function, so does individual ability in facing stress.

As previous studies reveal, intervention strategies given to reduce academic burnout is generally directed into coping-cognitive and control beliefs strategies. Schaufeli and Enzman as cited in Agustin (2017) confirm that one of strategies that is able to address stress in learning is cognitive behavioral therapy approach.

Therefore, this study intended to examine the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique to improve control beliefs and reduce academic burnout. In this counseling methods, counselee is given an understanding about the relation between situation, beliefs, and the effects on his or her emotional and behavior. As a result, the counselee will realize that burnout condition he or she faces is the impact of improper beliefs on difficult academic situation. Then, this feeling will convince them to change their thinking patterns and habits of thinking in dealing with difficult situation.

The use of cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling service with cognitive restructuring technique was expected to be able

to improve students; control beliefs and reducing their academic burnout.

## METHODS

This study involved 28 selected students from the total of 427. They were selected based on their pretest results indicating that they had high academic burnout and low control beliefs. After that, the subjects were randomly placed into 4 groups namely 2 control groups and 2 experimental groups with 7 members of each group. Randomization was performed to equalize the control group and the experimental group as well as to control the threats to internal validity (Purwanto, 2016)

This study used two instruments to collect data, namely Motivated Strategies from Learning Questionnaire (Pintrich, P.R., et.al., 1991) to measure control beliefs and Oldenburg Burnout Inventory developed by Demerouti as cited in Reis, D., et.al. (2015) to measure academic burnout. The academic burnout and control beliefs symptom scales were categorized into 3 types, namely high, medium, and low based on scoring technique and used 6 points of Likert scale. The measuring instrument used was adopted from foreign research yet had been through back translate.

The results of reliability test of MSLQ instrument with 4 items showed the cronbach's alpha value of 0.836, while OLBI with 16 items showed cronbach's alpha value of 0.810. Hence, both instruments were reliable to be used in data collection process of this study ( $> 0.6$ ).

For more, the analysis technique of this study was carried out by using Manucova test. Dependent variables tested were post-test data, while its covariates were pretest data. Both groups were fixed factors. Then, the result data were also analyzed by using Wilcoxon test to find out the differences of signification average of pre-test and post-test values of both groups.

Particularly, the intervention given into experimental group was cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring, while control group was not given any treatment. The treatment given adapted the intervention steps of cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique delivered by Cormier (2009) that consisted of 6 activities steps, namely forming groups and activity contracts, training coping thought and changing self-defeating thoughts into positive coping thoughts, learning reinforcing self-statements, identifying client's thought in burnout condition, training coping thoughts and changing self-defeating thoughts into positive thoughts, and evaluation and follow-up.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' academic burnout and control beliefs condition can be seen from the analysis results of their pretest and posttest. Table 1 presents academic burnout and control beliefs condition of experimental group, while table 2 presents academic burnout and control beliefs condition of control group.

**Table 1.** Academic Burnout and Control Beliefs Condition of Experimental Group.

	<i>Control Beliefs</i>		<i>Academic Burnout</i>	
	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Postest</i>	<i>pretest</i>	<i>Postest</i>
<b>High</b>		12 (92%)	13 (100%)	
<b>Medium</b>	7 (54%)	1 (8%)		1 (8%)
<b>Low</b>	6 (46%)			12 (92%)

**Table 2.** Academic Burnout and Control Beliefs Condition of Control Group.

	<i>Control Beliefs</i>		<i>Academic Burnout</i>	
	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest</i>	<i>Pretest</i>	<i>Posttest</i>
<b>High</b>			12 (86%)	9 (64%)
<b>Medium</b>	8 (57%)	10 (71%)	2 (14%)	5 (36%)
<b>Low</b>	6 (43%)	4 (29%)		

As showed in table 1, there found significant changes of control beliefs level in experimental group (pre = 54% medium, 46% low; post = 92% high, 8% medium) as well as its academic burnout (pre = 100% high; post = 8% medium, and 92% low). Meanwhile, table 2 shows the insignificant change of control group's control beliefs (pre = 57% medium, 43% low; post = 71% medium, 29% low) and academic burnout level (pre = 86% high, 14% medium; post = 64% high, 36% medium).

Based on the results of the test analyzed using manucova, the experimental group that was treated cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique showed higher control beliefs ability than the control group that was not given any intervention ( $F(1,23) = 14.335, p < 0.05$ ).

Similarly, the academic burnout of experimental group significantly reduced compared to control group ( $F(1,23) = 556.495, p < 0.05$ ).

Furthermore, based on Wilcoxon test result, the changes in pretest and posttest result showed the reduction of academic burnout level in experimental group ( $z = -3.183, p = 0.01$ ) as well as the control group ( $z = -2.178, p = < 0.01$ ). Even though both groups showed changes, the reduction of academic burnout level in experimental group was more significant rather than control group, while the changes of pretest and posttest value in control beliefs aspects informed that experimental group had significant increase ( $z = 3.187, p = < 0.01$ ) compared to control group ( $z = 0.359, p = < 0.01$ ). In brief, the result of Manucova and Wilcoxon tests can be seen in the following table.

**Table 3.** Manucova Test result

VARIABLES	GROUP	PRE-test		POST-test		Z SCORE
		M	SD	M	SD	
<i>Academic Burnout</i>	Experimental	77.31	4.29	37.77	3.06	-3.183*
	Control	74.71	5.33	70.00	3.42	-2.178*
	F (1,23)			556.495**		
<i>Control Beliefs</i>	Experimental	11.77	1.48	19.92	1.55	-3.187*
	Control	12.29	1.77	12.43	2.027	-0.359*
	F (1,23)			124.335**		

\*p&lt;0.01

\*\*p&lt;0.05

The results of this study are in line with several previous studies, including Mahfud et al. (2017); Agustin (2010); Hasan et al. (2019), and Mafirja et al. (2018). Those confirm that cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling is effective to reduce burnout, academic anxiety, academic stress, procrastination, and improve self-esteem. Ayuningtyas et al. (2020) also suggest that cognitive behavioral therapy group

counseling effectively helps students change their thinking pattern to be more positive, change dysfunctional beliefs to be more realistic, and lead them to direct themselves in facing difficult situation.

Subsequently, this study also found that cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling was not only able to reduce academic burnout, but also improve students' control beliefs ability

simultaneously. Students with low control beliefs tended to experience academic burnout compared to those with high control beliefs. Nonetheless, after cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique was given, their control beliefs continuously increased along with the decrease of their academic burnout.

Burnout is a condition happens due to individual self-defeating thoughts dynamics. In cognitive behavioral approach, especially cognitive restructuring, self-defeating thoughts dynamics is generally characterized by distorted automatic thoughts. In cognitive restructuring therapy perspective, the cognitive concept in individual who is experiencing burnout is defined as negative schemas of individual in facing actuating events which then leads into the emergence of distorted automatic thoughts. In the end, it results negative behavior and mood. In this study, the general forms of distorted automatic thoughts experienced by students with academic burnout were blaming (blaming teachers for giving too many assignments), negative labeling (I cannot or I am not able to), over generalization (all students who study in Islamic boarding school must have difficulties dealing with dividing their time), emotional reasoning and judgment focus (disliking particular lesson or teacher), catastrophizing (believing that if they persist with particular condition, the worse things would continuously happen), and so on.

During the treatment, counselee was taught about coping thoughts and its application in facing problematic situation. Coping thought also can be used to defeat distorted automatic thoughts, so self-defeating thought could be replaced by self-enhancing thoughts. This process belonged to control beliefs intervention on counselee.

Control beliefs is one of antecedents of individual academic emotion either positive or negative (Sunawan and Xiong, 2017). Sunawan and Xiong (2017) reveal that the consequences of an emotion towards individual cognitive performance is by proving the role of mediation of academic emotion in strengthening the

relation between control beliefs and individual cognitive performance. In line with this opinion, Dearfroff, J. et. al. (2003) and Brown, T.A. et al. (2004) say that academic burnout is closely related to control beliefs. Since stress can reduce individual self-control and vice versa, individuals with low self-control on a situation are probably experiencing stress and depression. Beliefs also have a role in healing depressive symptoms including negative emotion in burnout (Chaw et. al., 2014). Perceptions on self-control affect learning activities and self-achievement (Taylor, 2012). Students tend to experiencing burnout in learning due to their academic emotion as the effect of self-assessment on the situation faced (Maharani, 2019).

In performing cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling service with cognitive restructuring technique to reduce academic burnout and improve control beliefs, counselors must ensure that counsees deeply understand the condition they face is the effect of their negative thoughts on the situation. The ability to change beliefs is difficult to be done if counselee has not yet well understood the concept of relation between situation, beliefs, and the effect on their emotion and behavior.

## CONCLUSION

This study has successfully reduced the academic burnout of the ninth grade of MAN 2 Cilacap students by improving their control beliefs through cognitive behavioral therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique. However, the researchers realize that this study has several limitations. Probably, there are other factors beyond treatment that affect counselee control beliefs ability. These factors surely can contribute their ability in handling burnout. The implementation of pretest and posttest with the same instrument and materials also provide opportunity to conduct the learning process on the test performed by the subjects. In addition, there was a research subject from experimental group who resigned

thereby reducing the equality of subjects between experimental and control groups.

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