

## Group Counseling with Cognitive Restructuring Technique to Improve The Self-Efficacy and Assertiveness of Students Who Experienced Advanced Study Anxiety

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of group counseling by using cognitive restructuring technique to improve self-efficacy and assertiveness of Junior High School Mardisiswa 2 Semarang who experienced advanced study anxiety. The quasi-experimental method pre-test – post-test design involving 16 students selected by purposive sampling. The result of data analysis showed that there was an enhancement in self-efficacy and assertiveness after the treatment. The acquisition shows that group counseling by using cognitive restructuring technique is effective to improve self-efficacy and assertiveness of students who experience advanced study anxiety.

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## INTRODUCTION

Students experience various challenges in doing activities supporting both academic and non-academic achievements. One of which is anxiety. Widyartini, and Diniari (2016) state that anxiety experienced by adolescents, especially those who are still in school significantly can disturb their daily activities and developmental tasks. Also, it can affect both academic grades and social functions. For more, a competition did as an effort to continue studies which require academic achievement also causes anxiety on students.

This happens to students who want to enter favorite schools, but need to compete against others who have outstanding academic achievements. Those students would feel unconfident in their abilities in doing learning activities or, in other words, they lack optimum self-efficacy. Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2012) propose that self-efficacy is one's assessment on his abilities in organizing and carrying out a series of activities needed to achieve various form of set actions.

Anxiety can also make students difficult to convey feelings and ideas directly to others, and further cause less assertive. Vatankhah, Daryabari, Ghadami, and Naderifar (2013) explains that assertiveness is actions which enable individuals to act based on their interests, and assert justice according to their rights without feeling anxious and express their feelings comfortably or try to uphold their rights without disturbing others'.

Fundamentally, anxiety in fair intensity can be considered to have a positive value as motivation. However, when the intensity of an individual's anxiety is very strong and negative, it will disrupt the physical and psychological condition of the individual. This can be realized by the existence of some effects on learning concentration, self-confidence, self-efficacy, assertiveness, and many other psychological attributes. In relation to self-efficacy, some studies findings indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between anxiety and self-efficacy (Çubukçu, 2008; Deviyanthi, and

Widiasavitri, 2016; Permana, Harahap, and Astuti, 2016; Pratama, Idris, and Herdi, 2014; Rahadianto, and Yoenanto, 2014; Tahmassian, and Moghadam, 2011; Yari, and Bakht, 2012).

Furthermore, individuals who experience anxiety will tend to show less assertive behavior. This is supported by the results of studies saying that the level of individual's anxiety has a negative relationship with assertiveness (Baker, and Jeske, 2015; Kusumawati, Lilik, and Agustin, 2012; Malhotra, and Gupta, 2012; Misnani, 2016; Ostovar, Khorasani, & Rezaei, 2015).

By referring to the description above, it can be concluded that anxiety has a negative relationship with self-efficacy and assertiveness. In other words, the higher the anxiety experienced by an individual, the lower the self-efficacy and assertiveness will be.

One of the activities in a guidance and counseling service is group counseling. Gladding (2012) explains that group counseling is an effort done to help group members solve common life problems through interpersonal support and problem-solving. Several counseling approaches can be applied in a group counseling service, such as cognitive behavioral therapy. Some studies show that cognitive behavioral therapy (cognitive behavior therapy) is effective to improve self-efficacy and assertiveness (Ilkhchi, Poursharifi, and Alilo, 2011; Keshi, and Basavarajappa, 2013).

Cognitive restructuring is part of a technique developed in the cognitive behavioral therapy approach. Corey (2012) explains that cognitive restructuring is the process of identifying and evaluating an individual's mind, understanding the negative effects of behavior from a particular mind, and learning to replace those thoughts with more realistic, precise, and adaptive thoughts.

The steps in cognitive restructuring are: (1) collecting background information to reveal how counselees handle past, and current problems, (2) identifies counselees' negative thoughts (thinking errors), (3) introducing and practicing coping thoughts (conscious efforts to overcome personal and interpersonal problems,

and try to master, minimize, or tolerate stress or conflict), and (4) accompanying the counselees to switch from negative thoughts to coping thoughts by conveying coping statements (Erford, 2016; Indraswari, 2012; Mastur, 2012).

Group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique has been carried out and is known to be effective for improving assertive behavior, self-esteem and body image, as well as reducing academic anxiety, academic stress, academic procrastination and bullying behavior (Hasibuan, Purwanto, and Japar, 2018; Indri, Sugiharto, and Purwanto, 2016; Mafirja, Wibowo, and Sunawan, 2018; Rahmawati, 2016; Saputra, Purwanto, and Awalya, 2017; Selvia, Sugiharto, and Samsudi, 2017; Sulistiya, Sugiharto, and Mulawarman, 2017). The direction of this study was focused on efforts to test the effectiveness of group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique to improve self-efficacy and assertiveness of students at Junior High School 2 Mardisiswa Semarang who experience advanced study anxiety.

## METHODS

The method used in this study was a quasi-experimental pre-test – post-test design by involving 16 students of Junior High School 2 Mardisiswa Semarang selected by purposive sampling. Meanwhile, students whose anxiety was at the high category were selected as the sample of this study. The instruments used were an advanced study anxiety scale, self-efficacy scale, and assertiveness scale. First, the advanced study anxiety scale instrument consisted of 47 items, ( $\alpha = 0.935$ ) and was developed based on the symptoms of advanced study anxiety, namely physiological symptoms, and psychological symptoms. Further, this scale was prepared using a Likert scale with four answer choices.

Second, the self-efficacy scale instrument consisted of 20 items ( $\alpha = 0.922$ ) and was developed based on the dimensions of self-efficacy, namely academic self-efficacy and self-efficacy in self-regulation. This scale was designed by presenting statement items where respondents were asked to rate the level of

confidence in their ability to conduct activities required in completing tasks. These levels of confidence ranged from 10 units of intervals of 0 (cannot do), 30 (pretty sure can do), to 60 (very sure can do).

Third, assertiveness scale instrument consisted of 40 items ( $\alpha = 0.913$ ), and was developed based on assertiveness indicators, namely: expressing feelings openly, choosing intonation or the right form of expression in conversation, being able to start and maintain a comfortable relationship with others, having the ability to face reality, and willingness to listen and consider the other person's perspective. The assertiveness scale was managed by using a Likert scale with four answer choices.

The initial data collection was done by using random cluster sampling. In this stage, the researchers chose two classes as a study sample, consisting of 64 students. Then, the samples were asked to fill out the advanced study anxiety scale. After that, it was found that there were 16 students had a high level of advanced study anxiety, and involved as the study subjects. Furthermore, the students were asked to fill out the self-efficacy scale and assertiveness scale, then divided into two groups, namely the self-efficacy group and the assertiveness group. Next, the two groups were given treatment in the form of group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique.

Descriptive statistical analysis techniques were used to determine the level of anxiety of advanced studies, self-efficacy, and assertiveness. The effectiveness of group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique can be seen from differences in pre-test and post-test scores on the self-efficacy scale and assertiveness scale. To find out the difference, the Wilcoxon test was carried out.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The improvement in self-efficacy and assertiveness was known from the difference between pre-test and post-test. The results of descriptive analysis and Wilcoxon test of self-

efficacy and assertiveness groups are shown in table 1.

The results of the descriptive analysis indicated an improvement in self-efficacy at the post-test ( $M = 59.88$ ,  $SD = 4.016$ ) compared to the pre-test ( $M = 47.63$ ,  $SD = 7.818$ ), and there was an improvement in assertiveness during post-test ( $M = 67$ ,  $SD = 6.325$ ) compared to the pre-

test ( $M = 55.5$ ,  $SD = 4.87$ ). Furthermore, the Wilcoxon test results showed that the group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique group was effective to improve the self-efficacy of students who experienced advanced study anxiety ( $Z = -2.527$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and also effective to improve students' assertiveness in advanced study anxiety ( $Z = -2.524$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 1.** The Results of Descriptive Analysis dan Wilcoxon Test

Measurements		Self-efficacy group (n = 8)	Assertiveness group (n = 8)
Pre-test	M	47.63	55.5
	SD	7.818	4.870
Post-test	M	59.88	67
	SD	4.016	6.325
Z		-2.527	-2.524
p		< 0.05	< 0.05

The results obtained showed significant changes after students followed group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique. The improvement of self-efficacy and student assertiveness did not occur by itself, but it took place in group interactions along with the implementation of a cognitive restructuring technique. Hence, the application of group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique needs to be optimized to improve students' self-efficacy and assertiveness.

This is in line with Ilkhchi, Poursharifi, and Alilo (2011) that cognitive behavioral group therapy is effective and highly recommended to improve self-efficacy and assertiveness in students who experience anxiety. This treatment improves self-efficacy and assertiveness by providing various techniques to reduce dysfunctional thinking beliefs through efforts to challenge previous beliefs and replace them with rational thinking.

Self-efficacy is one of the most important factors in supporting an individual's success in following the learning process. If students are sure of all the potential they have, they will achieve optimal achievement. On the contrary, if students lack confidence in themselves, they will be trapped in doubt or independence because they are always dependent on others, will tend to often procrastinate in doing assignments, avoid assignments from the teacher, especially on challenging and difficult tasks.

Similarly, the above statement also happened to one's assertiveness. Assertiveness allows individuals to deal with stressor factors more effectively, increase self-confidence, express ideas and emotions logically, reduce anxiety, respect the rights of others and further improve their ability to deal with stress. It includes various behaviors that enable a person to act according to his interests and to uphold justice according to his rights without feeling anxious and express his feelings comfortably or try to uphold his rights without disturbing others'.

There was a difference in the improvement of the mean score, namely self-efficacy was higher than the improvement in the mean score of assertiveness. Likewise, with the acquisition of the Wilcoxon test, the self-efficacy group was higher than the assertiveness group. This showed that through the process of identifying, evaluating the negative thoughts of individuals, then replacing those thoughts with more appropriate and adaptive thoughts, self-efficacy performed better for the students who experienced advanced study anxiety.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the study that has been done, it can be concluded that group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique is effective to improve self-efficacy and assertiveness of students who experienced advanced study

anxiety. There were differences in the level of effectiveness between the two groups, namely group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique group is more effective to improve the self-efficacy of students who experienced advanced study anxiety.

Guidance and counseling teachers/school counselors are expected to be able to utilize group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique as an effort to improve self-efficacy and assertiveness of students who experience advanced study anxiety.

The future researchers are expected to expand the research population; for example, involving high school students, equality education students, and university students. Next, it is suggested to use the control group as a comparison, and monitor the duration of the impact of the intervention in dealing with improving students' self-efficacy and assertiveness.

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