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# Cognitive Behaviour Group Counseling with Cognitive Restructuring and Self-Instruction Techniques to Reduce The Social Anxiety of Public Senior High School 3 Pati

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#### **Abstract**

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This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques to reduce the social anxiety of Public Senior High School 3 Pati. The study used an experimental method with the design of randomized pre-test - post-test comparison group. Meanwhile, there were 24 students of Public Senior High School 3 Pati who experienced social anxiety involved as the subjects of the study. They were divided into three groups, namely group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique, group counseling with self-instruction technique, and group counseling with the combination of cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques. The results showed that cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques were able to reduce social anxiety. The combination of both techniques performed more effective in reducing social anxiety than the partial use, namely cognitive restructuring or self-instruction only. Further, this study for counselors implies that they are suggested to use cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques to reduce social anxiety of students. Moreover, the implication of the counseling is discussed in the results and discussion chapter.

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#### **INTRODUCTION**

Anxiety is easy to experience by adolescent because adolescence is a transitional phase or called a storm and the drunk period since in this phase, individuals tend to cause a lot of problems. One of the problems is anxiety, which may be experienced by individuals or adolescents in social interaction. In social interaction, not all individuals feel comfortable and safe. Some of them feel anxious, afraid, or worry about their surroundings. This phenomenon is called social anxiety.

The most difficult challenge for adolescents is interaction and adaptation to the increase in the influence of peers, changes in social behavior, social grouping, new values in friendship selection, support, social rejection, and leader selection. One that is vulnerable to adolescents personality is social anxiety. This happens because not all individuals are easy to feel comfortable in doing interaction with their social environment (Mutahari, 2016).

Social anxiety is a term used to describe an anxiety state indicated by emotional discomfort, fear, worry, and maladaptive behavior related to a social situation. These factors can be significant problems given the inevitable social nature of human and the function of social relations in their daily life. (McNeil, and Randall in DiBartolo, and Hofmann, 2014). Social anxiety disorder involves fear indicated by continuous negative evaluations in social situation or performance (DSM-5; American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

DiBartolo, and Hofmann (2014) states that socially anxious individuals tend to be shy and withdrawn as well as ineffective in social interaction. It may be caused by perceiving a negative reaction. Simply, social anxiety is the feeling of shame because of others' judgment or attention, and result in the prejudice that other people will judge negatively towards him. People who are afraid of social interaction will withdraw from association, try as little as possible to communicate, and will communicate when being forced. Further, when this person communicates, his talk tends to be irrelevant because if he talks

relevantly, he is afraid of getting others' reaction and being asked to speak more. This social anxiety may disturb one's normal development condition concerning a social and personal relationship. Moreover, it will result in avoidance or rejection. Also, the increase in social anxiety disorder in adolescents can be seen from several behaviors such as silencing, running away from home, fighting, and lying (Ford, Liebowitz, and Andrews, 2007).

By looking at the above problems, there is a need for group counseling services that can overcome social anxiety. One possible way to help individuals in the process of changing feelings, way of thinking, behaving related to social anxiety, having self-confidence in their abilities and positively perceiving others' perceptions of themselves is by applying cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) with two techniques, namely cognitive restructuring technique and self-instruction technique.

Cognitive behavior therapy group self-instruction was counseling with intervention applied in this study. According to Wibowo (2005) group counseling can create condition and atmosphere that enable individuals to reassess their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, perceptions change, attitudes, and feelings or their actions, as well as to prepare them to face life tasks. CBT approach argues that everything thought by human truly determines how they behave and feel (Glading, 2012).

Cognitive restructuring technique focuses on efforts to identify and change negative thoughts or negative self-statement and irrational clients' beliefs into positive and rational thoughts (Nursalim, 2014). The technique was designed to help to achieve better emotional responses by changing habitual assessment behaviors so that they are not too biased (Erford, 2016)

Ghamari, Rafeie, and Kiani study findings (2015) show that cognitive restructuring technique reduces students' anxiety when facing tests. Also, Nia, Tahmasebian, and Kakabaraee study (2014) reveal that cognitive restructuring technique is more effective to reduce students' anxiety than training the mind technique. Cognitive reconstruction helps students focus on

tasks and self-responses. This therapy makes students aware of any thoughts that cause anxiety, learn to express feelings, and problems. Meanwhile, Shikatani, Antony, Kuo, and Cassin (2014) in their study, states that cognitive restructuring technique causes the reduction of PEP and improves conditions (including reducing anxiety).

Zarei, Fini, and Fini (2010) explain that cognitive behavior method and CBT can reduce anxiety when students are about to take the tests conducted by Universitas Hormozgan. Further, Reiss, Warnecke, Tolgou, Krampen, Luka-Krausgrill, and Rohrmann study (2017) mentions that anxiety in taking tests is a common condition which may cause academic disturbances and difficulties for students. The intervention in her study was done using cognitive behaviors to reduce anxiety when taking tests. Thus, since the previous studies confirm that the use of counseling services with cognitive behaviors and CBT can reduce anxiety, the researchers were interested in conducting a study by employing cognitive behavior group counseling to reduce social anxiety.

Corey (2013) explains characteristics that distinguish cognitive behavior practitioners, namely systematic activities for goals and particular evaluation. Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) has some unique characteristics which distinguish it from the majority of other approaches. Moreover, the prominent cognitive behavior characteristic of this therapy is the systematic compliance with specifications and measurements.

Concerning efforts to reduce students' social anxiety, self-instruction technique has advantages. They can be seen in the following previous studies. First, Haddadian, Alipour, Majidi, and Majidi (2012) who carried out a study using self-instruction technique to improve reading skill, performance and reduce the anxiety of dyslexia students. Second, Dewantoro, Legowo, and Abdet (2016) explain that self-instruction technique is effective to reduce high school students when taking tests. These findings are supported by a study done by Nurmaliyah (2015) that self-teaching can reduce academic

stress. Cormier, Nurius, and Osborn (2009) says that there are three levels of cognition believed to have an important role in forming one's emotion and behaviors, namely (1) automatic thinking, (2) underlying assumptions, and (3) cognitive distortion.

Some previous studies have mentioned that cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques are effective to reduce social anxiety, also when they are combined with other techniques. However, there is a study mentioning cognitive restructuring only works on good cognitive flexibility and is less effective for bad cognitive flexibility such as anxiety (Johnco, Wuthrich, and Rapee, 2014). Similarly, Mokhtarifar, Amirbeyg, Jalalifar, Azinfard, and Safa study (2017) states self-construction is only effective to reduce math subject anxiety, but less effective to reduce anxiety to math teachers. Therefore, this study asserted the effectiveness of cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques to reduce students' social anxiety. Additionally, group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques were expected to be able to reduce social anxiety.

#### **METHODS**

This study applied a Randomized Pre-test–Post-test Comparison Group design. Meanwhile, the subjects for the experiment were selected using purposive sampling. Two hundred twenty students, the researchers selected 24 students who had a high level of social anxiety. Random assignment was carried out to place eight students into experimental groups which received CBT group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques.

The social anxiety was measured using the social anxiety scale derived from La Greca and Lopez theory (1998). The scale used consisted of some aspects, namely fear of negative evaluation, avoidance, and stress experienced in new situations, as well as social avoidance and a sense of pressure on new people. With the use of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient formula, the results of the calculation of the analysis items of social anxiety

variables were obtained. 70 statement items on each social anxiety scale, 42 items were considered valid, while the other 27 items were invalid. After that, the reliability test using Cronbach Alpha formula was conducted. The alpha coefficient obtained from the social anxiety scale was 0.898, meaning that it was very strong. At last, the Wilcoxon test analysis technique and Kruskal Wallis test were used to analyze the data.

There were three stages in this study — first, the provision of pre-test to measure social anxiety before interventions. Second, the provision of interventions to experimental group with cognitive restructuring technique as many as six meetings with 90 minutes time allotment for each. The same duration also went for other groups, namely self-instruction technique and the group with the combination of both techniques. Third, the provision of post-test to assess the level of social anxiety.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pre-test data showed that 24 students of Public Senior High School 3 Pati tended to have a high level of social anxiety. Further, they were given group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique, group counseling with self-instruction technique, and group counseling

with the combination of cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques to reduce social anxiety.

After analyses have been carried out, it was known that there was a reduction based on the comparison of pre-test and post-test scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that the above three group counseling was effective to reduce the social anxiety of the students of Public Senior High School 3 Pati. Moreover, the details of the scores are presented in the following table 1.

Based on table 1, the mean and standard deviation experienced reduction were ( $\chi^2 = 1.134$ , p < 0.01). First, cognitive behavior group counseling with cognitive restructuring technique in the pre-test obtained (M = 189.87; SD = 15.31), while in the post-test were (M = 128.75; SD =15.144). Second, Self-instruction technique in the pre-test obtained (M = 191.87; SD = 15.56), while in the post-test were (M = 151.50; SD = 16.72). Third, the combination of both cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques in the pre-test obtained (M = 185.37; SD = 15.69), while in the post-test were (M = 106.50; SD = 15.25). Once these data were obtained, the next step was Hypothesis Test using the Wilcoxon Test.

Table 1. Wilcoxon and Kruskal Wallis Analysis Tests

Groups	Pre-test		Post-test		7
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
CR	189.87	15.31	128.75	15.14	-2. 636**
SI	191.87	15.56	151.50	16.72	-2. 585**
CR + SI	185.37	15.69	106.50	15.25	-2.636**
$\chi^2$		1.342*	13.403**		

Information:

Z = Wilcoxon test

 $\chi^2$  = Wallis krukal test

ČR = Cognitive restructuring

SI = Self-instruction

According to table 1, the social anxiety levels in the cognitive restructuring group in the post-test (M = 128.75; SD = 15.144; Z = -2, 636, p < 0.01) experienced reduction compared to the pre-test (M = 189.87; SD = 15.319). Next, the level of social anxiety of students in the self-instruction group in the post-test (M = 151.50; SD = 16.72; Z = -2.585, p < 0.05) experienced reduction compared to the pre-test (M = 191.87;

SD = 15.56). The last group, namely the combination of cognitive restructuring and self-instruction in the post-test (M = 106.50; SD = 15.25; Z = -2, 636, p < 0.01) experienced the most significant reduction compared to the pre-test (M = 185.37; SD = 15.69). For more, to compare the level of effectiveness of the three groups, the researchers conducted Kruskal Wallis test. By referring to Kruskal Wallis test, there was a

difference between cognitive restructuring technique, self-instruction technique, and the combination of cognitive restructuring and selfinstruction techniques in reducing social anxiety  $(\chi^2 = 13.403, p < 0.05)$ . To reveal more effective techniques in reducing social anxiety, Mann Whitney analysis was carried out. The results of this analysis showed that cognitive restructuring technique was more effective to reduce social anxiety than self-instruction technique (Z = -2.100, p < 0.05), the combination of cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques was more effective to reduce social anxiety than cognitive restructuring technique (Z = -2.155, p < 0.05), the combination of cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques was more effective to reduce social self-instruction technique anxiety than (Z = -3.311, p < 0.01).

The findings are in line with the results of the previous study by Lahey (2009) that cognitive restructuring is the most important method in cognitive behavior theory based on the assumption that wrong cognitions such as beliefs, expectations, and maladaptive ways of thinking by individuals are causes of abnormal behavior.

The explanation is also following a study conducted by Ireel, Elita, and Mishbahuddin (2018) showing students' anxiety in facing tests experienced reduction after receiving group counseling service with cognitive restructuring. This can be seen from the results of pre-test and post-test. Namely, there was a significant influence on students' anxiety in facing the tests before and after receiving the treatment of group counseling service with self-instruction technique. It is relevant to the results of Dumitrache, Neacsu, and Sfeatcu study (2014) showing that cognitive restructuring technique significantly reduces anxiety for both global anxiety and its components in dental patients. After using cognitive behavioral techniques, the level of anxiety reduces significantly both for the global anxiety index and for its components.

The results of Olubusayo study (2014) show that cognitive restructuring technique is effective to reduce math subject anxiety in middle school students. It also shows that anxiety is

influenced by gender. Another study from Fernández, and Mairal (2017) mentions that behavioral action and cognitive restructuring techniques are effective to reduce anxiety response intensity. To reduce anxiety, they used two techniques, namely behavioral action and cognitive restructuring. Both techniques are effective to reduce anxiety.

The above findings are in line with previous studies findings, namely Dewi, Atmoko, and Triyono (2016) found that individual counseling with self-instruction technique is effective to improve self-efficacy. Meanwhile, cognitive behavior group counseling is effective to improve self-efficacy (Ilkhchi, Poursharifi, and Alilo, 2011; Valentina, 2013). Also, self-instruction technique is effective to reduce the tendency of academic burnout (Raqfika, Tjalla, and Chanum, 2016). After that, Agustin (2009) found that cognitive behavior group counseling can reduce academic burnout.

The previous studies only investigated the implementation of cognitive behavior group counseling in general and used different research designs in the service of group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques. On the other hand, the findings of this study asserted that cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction was effective to reduce social anxiety jointly in one experimental research design.

The provision of cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques on students' social anxiety could restructure their thoughts back to the positive one, change dysfunctional beliefs to be more realistic, and make them able to teach themselves through internal dialogue in dealing with difficult situation (Meichenbaum, 1977; Corey, 2013). These conditions become the learning process of students in evaluating the impact of changing ways of thinking because they learned to be responsible for changing the mindset that caused cognitive distortions and maladaptive conditions that hinder the reduction of social anxiety.

The findings of this study contribute an implication for counselors that in order to reduce students' social anxiety, they can utilize cognitive behavior group counseling service with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques. In implementing this service, the counselors need to pay attention to the availability of time to modify counselees' cognitive behavior (Corey, 2013). It is because cognitive behavior will have an impact on the aspect of anxiety reduction for counselees.

Additionally, the findings of this study successfully proved that cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques was effective in reducing social anxiety. However, the findings of this study had several limitations. They were such as the dominant involvement of female research subject, and the limited use of pre-test – post-test design. Therefore, this study has not revealed the effect of gender, and follow-up effect of seeing the effect of time by the cognitive behavior therapy group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques on social anxiety.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that cognitive restructuring technique, self-instruction technique, and the combination of both cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques were effective to reduce social anxiety, and can be used by counselors. However, the researchers found a difference in the level of effectiveness of the three techniques. It was found that the combination of cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques is more effective to reduce social anxiety compared to the use of one technique only, either cognitive restructuring or self-instruction.

Counselors are suggested to use the intervention of group counseling with cognitive restructuring and self-instruction techniques to reduce students' social anxiety at school. The last, since this study did not use a control group, therefore, the future studies are expected to add control groups to prove the effectiveness of group

counseling with cognitive restructuring and selfinstruction techniques.

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