

COGNITIVE TECHNIQUE TO IMPROVE SELF-CONCEPT AMONG ADOLESCENCESIN SCHOOL WITH DELINQUENT BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Low self-concept may contribute to negative behavior such as delinquency. The present study aimed to help delinquent school students who are adolescences to increase self-concept by applying Cognitive Technique of Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). 30 participants who completed Multidimensional Self Concept Scale were selected based on the score of (0-60) that indicated low self-concept level. These participants were divide into threegroups that consisted of weekly treatment group (T1), marathon treatment group (T2) and control group, with 10 members in each group. The T1 and T2 received the intervention while the control group was not provided any intervention. Pre and post interventional analysis were done. Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis of mean differences, MANCOVA and Post-Hoc Tukey were done. The results showed that self-concept of participants in treatment group increased significantly compared to the participants in control group. Also, the self-concept of the weekly treatment group was significantly higher compared to the marathon treatment group. As a conclusion, REBT is effective to improve self-concept among the delinquent students. The findings of this study sheds light on helping delinquent students to increase self-concept. These participants responded well to the therapy in improving their low self-concept. Also it is predicted that their delinquency may reduce once the self-concept is improved. This knowledge is beneficial for the educational institutions as they can provide such therapy to help the students.

Keywords: group counseling, REBT, quasi-experimental study, treatment and control group

Introduction

Delinquent behavior among adolescences is universal. Adolescence is typically associated with escalation of delinquent behavior, which can be contributed by social factors. Adolescences in various countries face such situation. For example, in Netherlands, 13.6% of children between 4 to 11 years old have such externalized behavior problems (De Looze et al., 2014). Some incidents of delinquent behaviors may vary across race and ethnic groups. Research by Mayeda et al. (2006) among Filipino Youth (17-21 years old) who were involved with

delinquent behaviour in Hawai'i found that Filipino, Native Hawaiian and Samoan youth demonstrated higher rates of disruptive behaviour than Japanese youth. While, a study in South Africa found that the Western Cape is one of the provinces where school students experienced high levels of delinquent behaviours, such as withdrawal from school involvement (including truancy, absenteeism and dropout), violent and other delinquent behaviours such as bullying, assault and carrying weapons to school (Flisher et al., 2006; Reddy et al., 2010). Compared to White students, non-White youth reported feeling less

safe at their schools and tend to be more involved in delinquent behaviors (V. E. Lee & Croninger, 1996). However, Nansel et al. (2001) found that personality also become one of main aspect related to delinquent behavior.

Most teenagers who are involved in delinquent behavior may have common characteristic. They may come from background of broken or problematic family, lower social economy status and lower academic achievement. According to Arum and Beattie (1999), there are numerous scientific research examined the relationship between poor school performance and delinquency. Maguin and Loeber (1996) found that poor school performance was related to the frequency of delinquent offends, the seriousness of offenses, and persistence in delinquency offending. However, student who excel in academic and who are highly intellectual were also involved in delinquent behavior. This was suggested by Rolf Loeber (1998), who cautioned that the relationship between delinquency and school performance should not be oversimplified. Both students who perform poorly or excellently in studies may be involved in delinquent behavior. Kiamburi (2007) suggested that delinquency among youths also occur in excellent learning institutions among excellent students and among students in religious school. This indicates that students in religious school may also be involved in delinquent behavior.

Several interventional studies were conducted to minimize delinquent behavior by using various psychological techniques. One of the ways to minimize delinquent behavior is by increasing or improving self-concept. According to Marsh et al. (2004), negative self-concept is regarded as an important risk factor for social dysfunction and problem behaviors in adolescence. A number of empirical studies have linked a negative self-concept to e.g. aggressive behavior (Marsh, Parada, Yeung, & Healey, 2001; Moretti, Holland, & McKay, 2001), rule-breaking and delinquent behavior. Levey et al. (2019)

in their study found that adolescents who have low level of self-concept reported higher levels of delinquency and he suggested that future research need to examine the protective role of self-concept in preventing adolescent delinquent behavior. Blakely-McClure et al. (2016) also found that having higher levels of self-concept lead to decrease in relational aggression across the transition to adolescence. Disruptive behaviour in adolescents was found to be highly correlated to deficiencies in cognition and social problem-solving abilities (Erickson, 1998; Taylor & Novaco, 2005). As such, cognitive-behavioural approaches was suggested as strongly effective in helping children and adolescents who experience behavioural difficulties (Erickson, 1998; Kendall & Panichelli-Mindel, 1995; Taylor & Novaco, 2005).

Several studies in Malaysia have identified the relationship between self-concept and adolescents' delinquent behaviour (Rohany et al., 2011; Zakaria, Noor, & Khir, 2018; Tharshini, Ibrahim, & Zakaria, 2020). However, the researchers of present study have noticed a lack of intervention in the country that aids to increase the self-concept of delinquent adolescents with the hope of minimizing delinquent behaviour. Previous studies have suggested to increase the positive self-concept of delinquent adolescents (Tharshini et al., 2020) and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to be used in assisting cognitive distortion among these adolescents (Rohany et al., 2011).

Although several studies suggested that CBT is effective for improving self-concept but limited research has been conducted in Malaysia to help increase self-concept among adolescences. However, to the knowledge of the researchers, no studies conducted to determine the effectiveness of group CBT intervention to improve self-concept among delinquents in Malaysia. Thus, present study has shed light to bridge the gap and provide evidence on having higher self-concept to reduce

delinquency through group CBT therapy.

In present study, the researchers applied cognitive technique as suggested in Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT). The research objective for present study is to determine the effect of this technique to improve self-concept to minimize delinquent behaviour among adolescences students through group therapy.

Literature Review

Rational Emotive Behavioural Therapy is a cognitive and behavioural approach. Thus, researchers have included here the past studies that investigated on Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) that are relevant. CBT approach is widely used to treat various psychological problems (Shafi A. & Nasser G., 2012) and is the most evidence based therapy. This approach is applied in individual and group counseling.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) emphasizes to reduce the negative beliefs that largely contributes to emotional and behavioural dysfunction. One of the most compelling reasons for CBT used in schools is that it can be used as a treatment approach and prevention (Corey M, Corey G, Corey C; 2003). A study was conducted to review the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral group therapy (CCBGT) among female students' self - concept based on Heimberg's model among 18 students (9 in each group; experimental and control group). The experimental group was treated with cognitive behavioral group therapy and control group did not receive any treatment. After 12 sessions of treatment, Heimberg's model of CBT was found effective in the improvement of self-concept among experimental students compared to the control group (Rahmanian, Mirzaian Panahande Vansofla, 2013).

Rosenberg (2003) suggested that self-concept has been conceptualized traditionally as containing both cognitive and affective components (totality of the

individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object of evaluation). Self-concept is an individual's perception of self that plays an important role in determining one's behaviour. A number of empirical studies have linked a negative self-concept to aggressive behaviour (Marsh, Parada, Yeung, & Healey, 2001; Moretti, Holland, & McKay, 2001), rule-breaking and delinquent behaviour, (Donellan, Trzesniewski, Robins, Moffitt, & Caspi, 2005; Hay, 2000). This association was found among different nationalities, age groups, and various assessments of the self-concept and delinquent behaviour (e.g. Donnellan et al, 2005; Murphy, Stosny, & Morrel, 2005; Trezniewski et al., 2006). Other researchers also found that level of self-concept could predict anti-social behaviour (Marsh et al, 2004; Johnston and Krettenauer, 2011). Lower reconsideration of self-concept has been related to higher delinquency (Mercer, Crocetti & Branie, 2017) and more externalizing problems (Hatano & Sugimura, 2016). All these findings proved the strong relation between low level of self-concept and delinquent behavior.

While in another study by Redondo et al (2012) in a study among Spanish juvenile offender's cognitive behavioral treatment was conducted that comprised six different therapeutic components such as self-control, cognitive restructuring, problem solving, social skills/assertiveness, values/empathy, and relapse prevention. The results indicated that the therapy was effective (with low to moderate effect sizes), there was an improvement in participants' social skills and self-esteem, as well as in reducing their aggressiveness.

On the other hand, studies showed that youth who have higher level of self-concept, and personal developmental are more likely to engage in positive behaviors and less likely to engage in risky behaviors (Search Institute, 2007). Positive self-concept means a person accepts his or her strengths and weaknesses, and this acceptance will

boost not only his/her self-confidence but also social relationships. A study by Arafah, Arafah, & Arafah (2020), also showed that self-concept has a direct positive effect on student's motivation. Strong intrinsic motivation are able to seek success (Osman, Mohamad, Mohamad, Mohamad, & Sulaiman, 2018). Positive self-concept functions as protective factor among the adolescents against antisocial behaviors that leads to the initiation of the ability to say "no" to unpleasant activities (Shafi A. & Nasser G., 2012). Findings of past studies suggested that higher self-concept is related to positive behavior, thus the researchers provided therapy to improve self-concept among delinquent adolescences with the prediction that their delinquency may be reduced.

Methodology

Participants

The participants were selected by using purposive sampling method. Participants selected had negative or antecedent life experiences, such as having a dysfunctional or unhealthy family relationship, family financial issues, being in an environment that rejects them, social interaction problem at school and peer influence. These subjects were also requested to complete an adopted questionnaire on

Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale (MSCS) which was developed by Tobin D.L (2000) and those with low level of self-concept were selected. A sample of 30 male participants from National Islamic Secondary School in Perak, aged 16-years-old who obtained the score of 0 - 60 that indicates low level of self-concept were selected. There were nine intervention group counselling sessions.

Research Design

Present study used quasi-experimental design to determine the outcome of the therapy to treatment and control group. Various studies in social sciences use experimental design method (Bistamam N. et al., 2009; Md Noah S. et al., 2013; Kummin S. et al., 2020). Subjects were divided into two major groups such as treatment (T) and control groups (C) by using pair random sampling method. Treatment group, consists of two groups which were marathon treatment group (T1) and weekly treatment group (T2) as shown by Figure 1 below. Each group consisted of 10 members. Both the T1 and T2 received treatment while C did not receive any intervention. T1 and T2 received a group counselling intervention of 10 sessions each using Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy (REBT).

Table 1: Experimental Research Design on Delinquent Behaviour Student

Treatment Group T1	01	X1	02
Treatment Group T2	01	X2	02
Control Group C	01		02

Note: T1=Marathon Group; 02=Post-test; T2=Weekly Group; C=Control Group; 01=Pre-test; X=Marathon Intervention; X2=Weekly Intervention

Data Collection

The Multidimensional Self-Concept Scale (MSCS) consists of 150 items. 74 of these items are positive, while the remaining 76 items are negative. However, for this study, the researchers have altered the instrument to make it shorter by adopting only 30 items from the scale. This altered scale obtained a high reliability and validity score which

is, .836 and .861 respectively. There are three categories of score, such as 0 – 60 low level of self-concept, score 61 – 90 as moderate level and score between 91 – 120 as high level of self-concept.

Ethical Consideration

Prior to the commencement of the study, clearance was obtained from the research committees of School of

Educational Studies, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Lembaga Kaunselor Malaysia (Board of Counsellors Malaysia). The participants were briefed about the background of the higher educational centre of the researcher, purpose, potential benefits and risks of the study. They were assured of the strict confidentiality of the data provided. Participants also were

informed that his participation in the study was voluntary and they had the right to join or opt out of the research any time they deemed fit. Finally, consent was taken from the participants after all the information was provided. The participants were given the researcher's contact details for him to access further details about the study.

Result

Descriptive analysis to identify REBT impact on self-concept for treatment and control group

Variable	Groups	Mean		
		Pre-test	Post-test	Difference Between Pre and Post Test
Self-Concept	T1	61.25	69.65	8.40
	T2	59.60	79.85	20.25
	C	60.65	58.90	- 1.75

Table 1: A summary of descriptive analysis of pre and post-test on self-concept of the treatment and control groups

*Note: T1 (marathon treatment group); T2 (weekly treatment group); C (control group)

Table 1 shows the analysis results to determine the difference between the pre-test and post-test mean score between treatment (T1 and T2) and control (C) group. Overall, REBT approach is effective to improve the self-concept of participants in both treatment groups, T2 (+20.25) and T1 (+8.4). However, the mean score for control group reduced by -1.75. This indicates, that REBT approach is effective in increasing the self-concept of participants in both the treatment groups. However, self-concept among weekly treatment group increased higher compared to marathon treatment group.

MANCOVA analysis to identify REBT 's impact on the self-concept for treatment and control group

A multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to compare the effectiveness of REBT to improve participants' self-concept between marathon treatment group (T1), weekly treatment group (T2) and control group (C). Table 2 shows that there was a significant difference in the mean scores, $F = 113.27$ ($p = .00$). The result also indicated that there was a significant difference in the mean scores separate groups ($p = .00$). Analysis also revealed that there was a significant difference in the measurement of pre and post-test on self-concept between the treatment group and the control group.

Table 2: MANCOVA analysis on mean scores of pre and post-test on self-concept (SC) among the participants

Sources	Control Variables	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
SC pre-test	SC post-test	1	3274.11	113.27	.00
Groups	SC post-test	2	2123.90	73.48	.00

* $p < .05$

As there is a significance difference between groups, therefore a Post-hoc Tukey analysis was conducted to identify the effect of REBT on the different group types (T1, T2 and C). Table 3 shows that there was a significant difference in self-concept between T1 and T2 ($p = .01$), between the T1 and C ($p = .01$), and between T2 and C ($p = .00$) on self-concept as a whole. There was a higher improvement in self-concept among weekly treatment group members compared to marathon group members.

Table 3: A summary of Post-Hoc Tukey Analysis on mean score difference between marathon treatment group, weekly treatment and control groups on self-concept (SC) among the study samples.

Variable	Types of Groups		Mean Difference (I – J)	Sig.
	I	J		
SC	T1	T2	- 10.20	.01
	T1	C	10.75	.01
	T2	C	20.95	.00

* $p < .05$

Note: T1=marathon treatment group; T2=weekly treatment group; C=control group

Discussion

In present study, REBT cognitive technique to reconstruct negative thoughts to positive thoughts was applied. Reconstruction of negative thoughts to positive can help to reorganize one's behavior, self-concept and emotion to be more positive too, thus the delinquent behavior can be minimized. The finding of the present study shows that REBT is effective in improving self-concept among National Islamic Secondary School (SMKA) students who experienced delinquency. The statistical analysis revealed that there was a significant difference in the mean score of self-concept in pre and post-test among the treatment groups, but there was no significant difference in pre and post-test in the control group. This is in accordance with the

findings by Rahmanian, Mirzaian Panahande Vansofla (2013) who found that treatment using Heimberg's model was effective in the improvement of experimental students' self-concept compared to the control group.

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) theory views delinquent behaviour as being multi-determined, resulting from an interaction between genetic, familial, and cultural factors with the individual's social learning history (Ellis, McNerney, DiGiuseppe, & Yeager, 1988). Once individuals dispute or challenge of their irrational thoughts, they can move toward how to engage in more effective thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Gossette & O'Brien, 1992; 1993). According to Kramer & Andrews (2002), REBT is

often combined with other methods of treatment such as group therapy (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous; Narcotics Anonymous), and psycho-educational programs. As such, the present study had incorporated REBT techniques in the group therapy process.

Intervention is very helpful to prevent one from getting involved in more serious negative behaviour in future. Education system may also focus on the personal development skill such as self-concept as an addition to academic excellences so that students graduate with positive behaviour too. Therefore, treatment and prevention of delinquent behaviour through intervention program that can help to improve the individual's self-concept should be implemented. This finding is supported by Search Institute (2017), which suggested that youth who have higher level of self-concept and personal development are more likely to engage in positive behaviors and less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

REBT intervention to increase self-concept among delinquent's adolescent has numerous empirical evidences (Redondo et al, 2012; Rahmanian & Mirzaian Panahande Vansofla, 2013). This study has added to the findings, where REBT is proven to be effective in increasing self-concept among delinquent students. This aids to minimize delinquent behaviour among adolescents. It is found that this intervention is appropriate to be applied among Malaysian to increase self-concept.

Concluding Remarks

Low self-concept may not be the only factor that contributes to delinquent behaviour, but it is beneficial to improve self-concept as past studies found that the delinquency reduced when self-concept increased. Identifying the cause of the problems at the early stage can be helpful in controlling and improving further on the negative behaviour.

Suitable intervention program such as counselling or psycho-educational cognitive program are important to prevent this issue from becoming more severe in the future especially this millennium or IR 4.0 generation. Hence, further studies are suggested to provide additional evidences for such intervention.

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