Effectiveness of CBT Approach in Group Counseling to Reduce Anxiety in Completing Thesis in Final Year Students of UNIPAR Jember

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Abstract

Effectiveness of CBT Approach in Group Counseling to Reduce Anxiety in Completing Thesis in Final Year Students of UNIPAR Jember. This study aims to test the effectiveness of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach in group counseling to reduce anxiety of final year students in completing their thesis at Universitas PGRI Argopuro (UNIPAR) Jember. Anxiety related to thesis is a common problem faced by final year students, which can hinder the academic process and completion of studies. CBT as a psychotherapy approach has been proven effective in overcoming various anxiety disorders. This study used an experimental design with pre-test and post-test methods to measure changes in students' anxiety levels before and after group counseling intervention using the CBT approach. The sample consisted of 48 final year students of UNIPAR Jember who were selected purposively, and the research procedure included providing group counseling sessions with CBT for several weeks. The results showed a significant decrease in anxiety levels after participating in CBT-based group counseling, which confirmed the effectiveness of this approach in

helping students overcome anxiety related to thesis. This study contributes to the field of educational psychology by showing that the CBT approach in group counseling is effective in reducing anxiety of final year students in completing their thesis, so that it can be applied as an intervention strategy in academic environments.

Keywords: *Effectiveness, CBT Approach, Group Counseling, Anxiety, Completing Thesis, Students*

A. Introduction

Final year students often face significant pressure when they have to complete their final assignment in the form of a thesis. Thesis requires not only academic skills, but also time and emotional management, which can ultimately trigger academic anxiety. According to Putri et al. (2020), this academic anxiety is often related to uncertainty about the future, lack of social support, and increasing academic demands. Prolonged anxiety can affect students' academic performance and have an impact on the completion of their studies.

Academic anxiety is one of the most common types of anxiety experienced by students, especially those in the final stages of their studies. Factors that cause this anxiety include the inability to manage the burden of academic work, lack of proper guidance from the supervisor, and pressure from the social environment and family to graduate soon (Santoso & Wijaya, 2019). This shows that final year students are susceptible to anxiety disorders that affect their mental health. This anxiety can hinder productivity in the thesis writing process, extend the completion time of studies, and in some cases can trigger burnout or emotional exhaustion.

The Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach is a form of psychological intervention that has been widely used to treat anxiety. CBT focuses on changing maladaptive thought patterns and ineffective behaviors, which are the root of anxiety disorders. According to Pratama and Wulandari (2021), CBT helps individuals identify and evaluate irrational negative thoughts that can trigger

anxiety. In addition, CBT also encourages individuals to develop more adaptive coping skills so that they can better deal with stressful situations. With a variety of approaches that focus on restructuring thoughts and behaviors, CBT has been shown to be effective in reducing anxiety in a variety of contexts, including academic anxiety.

The use of CBT in group counseling has also become a widely used intervention option in educational settings. Group counseling offers a supportive environment where students can share experiences, provide emotional support to each other, and learn from the experiences of peers (Rahmawati, 2020). In the context of completing a thesis, CBT-based group counseling allows students to identify and address thought patterns and behaviors that hinder them from completing this academic task. According to Hidayat and Nurhayati (2022), CBT-based group interventions allow participants to feel that they are not alone in facing academic anxiety, thereby increasing a sense of connectedness and social support that play an important role in reducing anxiety.

This research is motivated by the high level of anxiety experienced by final year students at Universitas PGRI Argopuro (UNIPAR) Jember in completing their thesis. Many students experience difficulties in time management, overcoming academic obstacles, and maintaining a balance between pressure from the external environment and their academic responsibilities. Therefore, a structured and effective intervention is needed to help students overcome this anxiety.

Several studies have shown that CBT-based group counseling is effective in reducing academic anxiety and improving students' academic performance (Putri et al., 2020; Rahmawati, 2020). In addition, previous studies on the use of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in the context of reducing anxiety have shown significant results, both in individual and group settings. According to Hofmann et al. (2012), CBT has been shown to be one of the most effective approaches to addressing anxiety in the general population. Furthermore, research conducted by Norton and Barrera (2012) confirmed that this therapy has a significant effect on

reducing generalized anxiety disorder in groups of students. In the academic environment, anxiety in completing academic tasks, especially theses, is an issue that is increasingly being researched, and CBT is consistently recognized as being able to overcome these challenges.

However, research that specifically examines the effectiveness of CBT in group counseling for final year students in the context of completing a thesis is still limited. Most studies focus on the use of CBT to overcome academic anxiety in general, without considering the specific aspects of anxiety experienced by students in the final stages of their studies. For example, research conducted by Purdon et al. (2014) emphasized more on exam anxiety and college assignments, without distinguishing anxiety related to the thesis as a final assignment that has a heavier psychological burden.

Therefore, this study attempts to fill the gap by specifically examining how CBT in group counseling can reduce anxiety experienced by final year students when completing their thesis. Different from previous studies that focused more on individual interventions or academic anxiety in general, this study directs attention to specific aspects of anxiety that arise at the stage of completing the thesis and tests a group approach that has not been widely explored in this context. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap by examining the extent to which the CBT approach in group counseling can help final year students at UNIPAR Jember overcome their anxiety and accelerate the completion of their thesis.

B. Method

This study aims to measure the effectiveness of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach in group counseling to reduce anxiety in final year students of UNIPAR Jember who are completing their thesis. The population of the study was 48 students from three classes: class A (7 people), class B (31 people), and class C (10 people). The sampling technique used was Stratified Random Sampling, because the population was divided into uneven subgroups.

Stratified Random Samplingallows for proportional sample division according to the number of students in each class. From the total population, 50% was taken as a sample, namely 24 students. The sample was divided based on the proportion: 3 students from class A, 13 students from class B, and 4 students from class C. Samples were then taken randomly from each class. This technique was chosen to ensure that each class is represented proportionally, so that the research results are more accurate and can be generalized (Yuniarti, 2019). To maintain the validity and generalization of research results, Stratified Random Sampling is considered more appropriate (Wahyuni & Prihastuti, 2020). This technique is very relevant to studying the effectiveness of CBT in reducing students' academic anxiety, because this technique provides a fair representation of the population (Subekti, 2021). The participants in this study had varying demographic characteristics, but they were all in the final stages of their studies and were in the process of writing their thesis. Demographic data such as gender, age, and relevant academic experience were not the main focus, but will be recorded for further analysis if necessary.

The experimental procedure in this study involved dividing final year students of UNIPAR Jember who experienced anxiety in completing their thesis into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group received group counseling intervention with a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach for several structured sessions, while the control group did not receive similar intervention. Before and after the intervention, both groups underwent anxiety level measurements using validated instruments, such as a thesis-specific anxiety scale. Control variables maintained throughout the study included age, gender, and initial anxiety level, as well as relatively similar academic environmental conditions to avoid external bias that could affect the results (Shadish et al., 2002).

Data analysis in this study was carried out by comparing the pre-test and post-test results between the experimental group and the control group to measure changes (Fraenkel et al., 2019) in anxiety levels. The analysis technique

used was a parametric statistical test such as a paired sample t-test to see significant differences in the experimental group before and after the CBT intervention, as well as an independent sample t-test to compare the differences between the experimental group and the control group. In addition, the analysis of the effectiveness of CBT was carried out by calculating the effect size to determine the extent to which the intervention had an impact on reducing thesis anxiety. The results of this analysis will show whether group counseling with a CBT approach is significantly more effective in reducing anxiety than groups that did not receive intervention.

C. Discussion

1. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a therapeutic approach that aims to help individuals identify and change maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors. CBT is based on the premise that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors influence each other. Research by Rahmawati (2020) explains that CBT focuses on modifying negative thought patterns that cause emotional problems such as anxiety. In the context of final year students who are completing their thesis, CBT aims to overcome academic anxiety that often arises due to pressure and high expectations related to completing the final assignment.

CBT involves several key techniques that are effective in reducing anxiety:

a. Cognitive Restructuring: This technique helps individuals identify and challenge negative thoughts or cognitive distortions. According to Putri et al. (2020), cognitive restructuring can reduce anxiety by helping students replace unrealistic thoughts about their ability to complete their thesis with more rational and positive thoughts.

b. Stress Management: This technique involves exercises to reduce stress, such as relaxation and mindfulness techniques. Hidayat and Nurhayati (2022) showed that stress management helps students cope with the

tension associated with thesis deadlines, reduces anxiety symptoms, and improves their emotional well-being.

c. Activation Behavior: CBT also uses activation behavior to encourage individuals to engage in positive and productive activities. Research by Pratama and Wulandari (2021) shows that activation behavior helps students increase motivation and involvement in the thesis completion process, reducing anxiety associated with academic burden.

Several studies have shown that CBT is effective in reducing academic anxiety among college students. Fitria and Yusuf (2023) found that CBT can significantly reduce anxiety symptoms and improve coping skills among college students, especially in the context of academic pressure such as completing a thesis. Research by Santoso and Wijaya (2019) supports these findings by showing that students who underwent CBT therapy experienced decreased anxiety and increased self-confidence in facing their academic tasks.

CBT-based group counseling is an approach that combines CBT techniques with social support from the group. Research by Hidayat and Nurhayati (2022) shows that group counseling can increase the effectiveness of CBT by providing a platform for students to share experiences and coping strategies. Group counseling allows participants to feel supported by peers who are experiencing similar situations, which can reduce feelings of isolation and increase their motivation to complete their thesis.

Research by Lestari and Fatimah (2020) revealed that social support in CBT-based group counseling plays an important role in reducing academic anxiety, because participants can share coping strategies and get constructive feedback from fellow group members. Group counseling also facilitates social interactions that can help students feel more connected and motivated.

Although many studies support the effectiveness of CBT and group counseling, there are some limitations that need to be considered. Research by Yuliana and Indratno (2023) showed that not all students respond to CBT therapy in the same way, especially if they have specific individual problems or

difficulties in following therapy techniques. Therefore, it is important to adjust the CBT approach to individual needs and consider contextual factors that may affect the effectiveness of therapy.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is an approach that has been proven effective in addressing academic anxiety, especially in the context of final year students completing their thesis. Key techniques in CBT, such as cognitive restructuring, stress management, and activation behavior, provide the tools needed to address anxiety and increase academic engagement. CBT-based group counseling adds an important dimension of social support, helping students feel more connected and supported. This study contributes to the understanding of how this approach can be effectively applied to reduce anxiety and support the completion of final year students' thesis at UNIPAR Jember.

2. Anxiety

Anxiety is an emotional response characterized by excessive feelings of worry, anxiety, or fear about a particular situation. Anxiety can appear in various forms, such as general anxiety, social anxiety, and academic anxiety. According to the American Psychological Association (2021), anxiety is a normal reaction to stress, but when anxiety becomes excessive and interferes with daily functioning, it can develop into an anxiety disorder.

Academic anxiety is a form of anxiety that is commonly experienced by students, especially final year students who are completing their thesis. Research by Rahmawati (2020) shows that students often face high pressure to meet academic expectations, which can lead to increased anxiety. This anxiety is often caused by factors such as tight deadlines, heavy workloads, and concerns about the future after graduation.

Some factors that can cause academic anxiety among students include: (a) Social Pressure: Students often feel pressured to meet the expectations of parents, friends, and society. Anxiety can increase when they feel that they

cannot meet these expectations (Lestari & Fatimah, 2020). (b) Self-Perception and Beliefs: Students who have negative views of themselves or feel incapable of completing academic tasks may experience higher levels of anxiety (Hidayat & Nurhayati, 2022). (c) Poor Time Management: Inability to manage time and priorities can cause students to feel overwhelmed and anxious when approaching deadlines (Putri et al., 2020).

Academic anxiety can have negative effects on students' mental and physical health. Some of the possible impacts include:

a. Decreased Academic Performance: Students with high anxiety often have difficulty concentrating, which can affect their academic performance. Research by Santoso and Wijaya (2019) shows that students with high anxiety tend to have lower grades and have difficulty completing assignments.

b. Poor Mental Health: Prolonged anxiety can lead to mental health disorders such as depression and other anxiety disorders (Fitria & Yusuf, 2023). Therefore, it is important to overcome academic anxiety so that students can maintain their mental health.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) can be used to help students recognize and change negative thought patterns that cause anxiety. According to Rahmawati (2020), CBT techniques, such as cognitive restructuring, can help students replace negative thoughts with more positive and realistic thoughts. Completing a thesis is a stressful moment for final year students. Anxiety related to completing a thesis can affect students' mental health and their ability to complete the task. Research by Yuliana and Indratno (2023) highlights the importance of psychological support, including CBT-based counseling, to help students overcome anxiety and increase their confidence in completing their thesis.

Academic anxiety is a significant problem among college students, especially those who are completing their thesis. Anxiety can be caused by a variety of factors, including social pressure, self-perception, and time

management. The impact of this anxiety can be detrimental, including decreased academic performance and poor mental health. Therefore, it is important to implement anxiety management strategies, such as social support, CBT techniques, and stress management, to help students overcome anxiety and complete their thesis successfully.

3. Effectiveness of CBT Approach in Group Counseling to Reduce Anxiety in Completing Thesis in Final Year Students

Before and after the intervention, all participants were asked to complete an anxiety questionnaire consisting of several items measuring their anxiety levels. The scale used was a Likert scale of 1-5, where 1 indicates a very low level of anxiety and 5 indicates a very high level of anxiety.

After collecting the data, an analysis was conducted to calculate the average anxiety score before and after the intervention in each class. The following is a table showing the results:

Class	Number of participants	Pre-Intervention Anxiety Score	Post-Intervention Anxiety Score	Anxiety Score Decrease
A	3	4.3	2.5	1.8
B	13	4.1	2.7	1.4
C	4	4.2	2.8	1.4

From the table above, it can be seen that all classes experienced a significant decrease in anxiety scores after participating in the intervention. The average pre-intervention anxiety score for Class A was 4.3, while after the intervention it decreased to 2.5, indicating a decrease of 1.8. Classes B and C also showed a significant decrease, although not as large as Class A.

To determine whether the decrease in anxiety scores that occurred was statistically significant, a paired t-test was conducted. This test is used to compare two means from the same group (pre- and post-intervention anxiety scores) and to see if there is a significant difference.

The results of the paired t-test showed a significant p-value ($p < 0.05$). This indicates that there is a significant difference in the level of anxiety before and after the intervention. Thus, the research hypothesis stating that the CBT approach is effective in reducing student anxiety can be accepted.

In addition, to determine whether there is a difference in reducing anxiety between classes, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This test helps evaluate whether there is a significant difference in the results of the intervention between the three groups (Class A, B, and C).

The results of the ANOVA test showed that there was no significant difference in reducing anxiety between classes ($p > 0.05$). This means that even though there are differences in the number of students in each class, the CBT approach applied provides consistent results in reducing anxiety levels in all classes.

- Average decrease in anxiety:
- Class A: 1.8
- Class B: 1.4
- Class C: 1.4
- The p-value of the paired t-test: $p < 0.05$
- ANOVA test results: $p > 0.05$

The results of this study indicate that the CBT approach in group counseling has significant effectiveness in reducing anxiety in final year students when completing their thesis. This finding is in line with previous studies stating that CBT is an effective method for overcoming various psychological problems, including academic anxiety.

The significant decrease in anxiety levels, especially in Class A, suggests that CBT-based group counseling can help students develop coping skills for stress and anxiety that often arise in the academic process. Techniques taught in CBT, such as identifying negative thought patterns and replacing them with more positive ones, may have contributed to this decrease in anxiety.

The ANOVA test results showing no significant differences between classes indicate that the effectiveness of the CBT approach is not affected by class size. This indicates that both small and large groups can benefit equally from this intervention. However, the greater decrease in anxiety scores in Class A may be related to the smaller sample size, which can result in a more intimate and supportive group dynamic.

In addition, the group counseling process allows participants to share experiences and support each other, which can also contribute to reducing anxiety. The social support gained during group sessions can help students feel more connected and more able to face the challenges they face in completing their thesis.

The results of the study on the effectiveness of the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach in group counseling to reduce anxiety in final year students at UNIPAR Jember are influenced by several factors. One of the main factors is the initial level of anxiety possessed by each participant. Students with higher levels of anxiety may show a more significant response to CBT interventions compared to students with lower anxiety from the start. This is supported by the study of Norton and Barrera (2012), which found that individuals with more severe anxiety symptoms tend to show greater improvement after undergoing CBT. In addition, students' experience in participating in group counseling also affects the results, where those who are more open to sharing experiences and actively participating in sessions benefit more from this intervention.

Other factors that influence the results are the duration and intensity of the CBT intervention. This study may be limited by the number of group counseling sessions provided, while some previous studies, such as those by Spence et al. (2000), suggest that optimal results are achieved when the intervention is conducted with more sessions and over a longer period of time. In addition, external factors such as social support outside of counseling sessions, a supportive academic environment, and the level of academic and

non-academic burden experienced by students may influence the success rate of the intervention. Students who receive strong social support from friends, family, and lecturers tend to recover from anxiety faster than those who feel isolated or have a heavy workload.

The results of this study indicate that the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach in group counseling is effective in reducing anxiety in final year students in completing their thesis. This finding is in line with previous research by Hofmann et al. (2012) which found that CBT is one of the most effective interventions for reducing various types of anxiety, including academic anxiety. Specifically, Hofmann et al. (2012) stated that CBT is able to help individuals identify and change negative thoughts that contribute to anxiety, which is the core of anxiety related to completing final assignments such as theses.

Research by Norton and Barrera (2012) also supports these findings, where they found that CBT, both in individual and group formats, was effective in reducing general academic anxiety. Although Norton and Barrera's study focused more on exam anxiety, the concepts used are still relevant to this study. CBT in a group context allows participants to share experiences and gain social support, which Norton and Barrera's research suggests enhances the effectiveness of therapy. This is also relevant to the context of completing a thesis, where students often feel isolated, and group counseling can help reduce these feelings.

However, a comparison with the study by Purdon et al. (2014) revealed that the CBT approach in overcoming thesis anxiety may require certain modifications. Purdon et al. found that although CBT was effective in overcoming academic anxiety, the duration of therapy and the higher intensity of final year students' anxiety required a more intensive approach or additional stress management techniques. In this study, although there was a significant decrease in anxiety, some participants expressed the need for additional sessions to further solidify the cognitive changes experienced.

Thus, the results of this study confirm the effectiveness of CBT in group counseling for reducing thesis anxiety, but also suggest that this approach may be more effective if tailored to the specific needs of final year students. As outlined by Spence et al. (2000), the optimal duration and frequency of CBT intervention may differ depending on the level of anxiety experienced, and in the context of a thesis, heavier psychological burdens require more intensive attention. Furthermore, the similarity of findings with Seligman and Wuyek (2007) suggests the importance of considering individual factors, such as personal tendencies toward anxiety, that may influence the effectiveness of CBT in an academic context.

These findings have important implications for educational institutions, which need to develop CBT-based counseling programs for college students. Furthermore, this study suggests the need for more programs that integrate social support aspects into the counseling process, as this may enhance the effectiveness of the intervention. Further research is recommended to explore other variables that may influence the effectiveness of CBT, such as demographic characteristics of participants, length of intervention, and the influence of environmental factors outside the classroom. It is also important to explore how CBT techniques can be tailored to meet the specific needs of different student groups. Overall, this study provides evidence that a CBT approach to group counseling is an effective strategy for addressing academic anxiety among college students, and can serve as a model for similar interventions in other educational institutions.

D. Conclusion

This study found that Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) applied in group counseling has a significant impact on reducing academic anxiety in final year students who are writing their thesis. Before counseling began, students experienced quite high anxiety related to the pressure of completing their thesis and academic demands. After participating in a series of CBT sessions designed to

address negative thoughts and maladaptive behaviors, there was a significant decrease in students' anxiety levels. The paired t-test showed that the p value <0.05, which means that the difference before and after the intervention was statistically significant. These findings indicate that CBT is an effective approach to dealing with academic anxiety in students, especially in critical phases such as writing a thesis.

CBT-based group counseling provides a space for students to get social support from group members who are facing similar problems. Students can share experiences, worries, and coping strategies used, creating a sense of togetherness that helps reduce the burden of anxiety. CBT in this group focuses on cognitive restructuring, where students are invited to identify unrealistic or negative thought patterns and replace them with more adaptive thoughts. In addition, stress management techniques such as relaxation and emotional control are taught so that students can more effectively manage academic pressure. This group environment also fosters a sense of mutual support, which is an important factor in successfully reducing anxiety.

One of the important findings of this study is that the effectiveness of CBT remained consistent, regardless of the variation in counseling group size. Although the number of students in each group varied, from small to large groups, the ANOVA test showed that there was no significant difference in the reduction of anxiety levels between the groups. This suggests that CBT interventions can be implemented on a flexible scale without reducing their effectiveness. This is important for educational institutions that may face limited counselor resources or facilities, as CBT can still provide effective results in both small and large groups.

These findings have important implications for educational institutions, which need to develop CBT-based counseling programs for college students. Furthermore, this study suggests the need for more programs that integrate social support aspects into the counseling process, as this may increase the effectiveness of the intervention. Limitations of this study include the small sample size, the

limited duration of the intervention, and the lack of measurement of external factors such as social support and other academic stressors that may influence the results.

Further research is recommended to explore other variables that may influence the effectiveness of CBT, such as demographic characteristics of participants, length of intervention, and the influence of environmental factors outside the classroom. Also, it is important to explore how CBT techniques can be adapted to meet the specific needs of different student groups.

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