The Effectiveness Of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) To Reducing Anxiety Of 6Th Grade Elementary School Students Who Will Face The National Exam

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to test the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) to reducing anxiety of 6th grade elementary school students who will face the national exam. The research participants were 24 students from the Indonesian Quantum School. This research is an experimental study using a single-group pretest-posttest design (one group pretest-posttest design). The techniques given are self-talk, deep breathing, progressive muscular relaxation, imagery, psychoeducation, and rewards. The data were obtained using the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) to measure students' anxiety in facing exams, open-ended questions to students, and interviews with school principals and class coordinators. The analysis technique used is the paired sample t-test, analysis of changes in anxiety categories, and determining the themes of the interview results. Based on the results of the paired-sample t-test, the t value was 3,260 with a significance value of 0.003 (p <0.05). Thus the hypothesis proposed in this study is accepted, namely, CBT is effective in reducing anxiety facing the national exam in 6Th grade elementary school students. The results of the anxiety category analysis showed that after participating in the training, there was a decrease in the number of students with anxiety in the moderatly high and high anxiety categories (13 people to 8 people) and high normal anxiety (11 people to 4 people). The number of participants with anxiety in the normal and low categories is increasing (0 to 12 people). Based on the results of the interview, it was found that after participating in the training, the class coordinator felt calmer because the students were better prepared for the psychological techniques that had been taught. The principal was satisfied that the student's grades had improved and asked that training be held again for the next batch.

Keywords: Cognitive Behavior Therapy ; Test Anxiety ; Elementary School Students

1. Introduction

The national exam is an important part of the education process in Indonesia. The national exam is part of the national evaluation system for basic and secondary education standards and the equal quality of education levels between regions carried out by the education assessment center (Setiawati et al., 2018). The success of the national exam is also largely determined by how the teacher can thoroughly deliver the learning material so that it can be mastered and understood by students. This can be proven from the results of the national exam, whether the students have been able to achieve the predetermined standard scores or not. From this value, it can be determined which students are entitled to continue their education to a higher level or who are not. In addition, the results of the national exam can be used as an evaluation material to improve the quality of education in each school and a reference for the government to see the condition and quality of education

in Indonesia, this refers to UU (Constitution) No. 20 of 2003 concerning the National Education System, Article 58 paragraph (2) states that: *"Evaluation of students, educational units, and educational programs is carried out by independent institutions periodically, thoroughly, transparently, and systemically to assess the achievement of national education standards"*.

The importance of national exams as a tool to measure student success in pursuing education is often a challenge and a burden for students. The national exam then becomes a frightening condition for students, especially elementary school students. For students, this anxiety arises because of the pressure for achievement from parents, teachers, and self-demands (Kristiyani, 2009). Many students feel anxious and frightened, such as research conducted by Sarason (in Beidel, Turner, & Taylor-Ferreira, 1999) which shows that many students are anxious about facing exams. The anxiety that students feel when they are about to face a test in psychological terms is called test anxiety. Anxiety occurs when a certain situation or object that is not real is perceived as something scary or threatening (Sarason in Zeidner, 1998).

Test anxiety experienced by students is caused because the test situation or the nature of the evaluative situation is perceived as something that is threatening and tense, as is a general perception which is subjective in nature, so a situation or situation which for some individuals is considered threatening, may be considered non-threatening for some other individuals. in other words, a person's assessment of a situation depends on his subjective assessment of that situation. Spielberger (1972) explains that the factor that distinguishes a person in perceiving a situation or object as more threatening is the difference in anxiety traits. This concept is known as basic anxiety. Individuals who have high basic anxiety will also have high anxiety in certain special situations, which is called state anxiety. One of the basic forms of anxiety in special situations is test anxiety. In this case, individuals who have a high level of test anxiety will perceive the test situation as more threatening and likely to fail, compared to individuals who have low test anxiety. In addition to affecting perception, test anxiety can also cause physiological responses, such as an increase in heart rate, respiratory rate, sensation in the stomach, feelings of nausea, sweating, cold and damp hands, the desire to urinate, and shaking (Suinn in Zeidner, 1998). This is in line with research conducted by Galassi (in Zeidner, 1998) regarding experiences related to sensations in the body when experiencing anxiety or the so-called symptoms of autonomic arousals, such as sweating hands or body, racing heart, tense stomach, dry mouth. trembling hands or body.

Even though test anxiety is considered normal and not entirely detrimental, it is sometimes even needed by students, especially those related to learning motivation. Students' anxiety at a moderate level will lead to optimal performance. But in reality, the anxiety facing exams can adversely affect learning achievement results if anxiety levels are high. In line with this, research conducted by Yerkes and Dodson (in Sapp, 1999) shows that a high level of student anxiety will prevent students from performing effectively. According to Lewis (1969), excessive anxiety will affect the academic and social life of students and result in low student motivation, poor coping skills with strategies, negative self-evaluation, and difficulty concentrating. According to Hill (in Zeidner, 1998) at least two to three students in the class are classified as having high anxiety when in a test situation. The research is in line with research conducted by Hill which involved 10,000 elementary and middle school students in America. The study shows that the majority of test-takers fail to perform their true abilities, because of anxiety triggered by the situation and atmosphere of the test. On the other hand, students showed better results when the elements that caused it under psychological stress were reduced or eliminated. This suggests that students who master the material being tested have a chance of failing to show real ability because of anxiety when facing exams. Other studies have shown that anxiety in facing exams among school children is caused by an extreme fear of performing poorly on exams (Barrios et

al in Beidel et al., 1999). This result is in line with the opinion of Hill (in Wigfield & Eccles, 1989) which explains that test anxiety causes 10 million elementary school students to perform poorly on the test.

Test anxiety needs to be reduced to facilitate the learning process in facing national exams. This is also in line with research conducted by Ergene (2003) who reported that test anxiety began to affect the performance of fourth-grade elementary school children and recommended that test anxiety prevention programs be introduced in lower grades. Several interventions have been carried out to deal with anxiety in students in the developmental age range of children and adolescents, including systematic desensitization, medication, family intervention, and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) (Haugaard, 2008). Of the four interventions, CBT has the advantage of combining several interventions into a strategy that affects various issues related to anxiety, for example using cognitive therapy to modify cognition that reinforces anxiety with positive self-talk and imagery and also using behavioral strategies with deep breathing and progressive muscular relaxation to improve the child's ability to cope with anxiety during exams (Buchler, 2013).

CBT is also frequently used in children, namely 79% of children under 10 years (Durlak, 1991). CBT has been used in children under 7 years of age who have a variety of problems at school. Although CBT is quite complicated and complex, many tasks given in CBT tend to use concrete abilities compared to abstract thinking concepts (Harrington, in Stallard, 2002). The operational concrete stage in children's cognitive development that is reached at the age of approximately 7 years is considered sufficient to carry out basic tasks on CBT (Verdyun, in Stallard, 2002). Therefore, this study aims to test the effectiveness of CBT to reduce anxiety in facing exams, specifically facing the national exam in 6th grade elementary school students.

2. Research Methods

This study uses a quasi-experimental method. Quantitative data were obtained using the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) measuring instrument compiled by Driscroll (2004). This scale is based on 2 aspects of anxiety, namely impairment which refers to memory loss and poor cognitive processing consisting of 6 items, namely items 1, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10, and the worry/dread aspect which refers to intrusive worry / catastrophizing consisting of 4 items. namely items 2, 3, 7, and 9. In general, this scale consists of 10 items, all of which are favorable. From the results of the item discrimination power test, it is known that 9 items meet the criteria because they have the item-total correlation coefficient value> 0.30, and 1 item is number 8.

Qualitative data were obtained using open-ended questions and then a thematic analysis was carried out, in which the researcher categorized the answers from 24 participants according to their theme. Researchers also used unstructured interviews after the intervention with the principal and class coordinator teacher for class 6 to obtain an overview or evaluation of the results of the intervention. The results of unstructured interviews were also analyzed using thematic analysis, namely grouping based on the answer's theme

The research design used a single pre-test - post-test group (one group pre-test post-test design) (Creswell, 2016) which consists of three (3) stages, namely pretest, intervention, and posttest. To test the effectiveness of the intervention, the paired sample t-test analysis technique was used. In the early stages of the research, the participants were screened first. All students (50 children) were given a Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) to measure the level of anxiety and also open questions to determine perceptions, feelings, physiological responses, and participant behavior when facing national exams, and how to overcome them. Based on the grouping of anxiety levels, then a cut-off was carried out, namely students who had high normal anxiety, moderatly high, and high test anxiety level. Overall, 24 students will participate in the intervention. The score

from the Westside Test Anxiety Scale (WTAS) is then presented as pretest data. The next stage is intervention (giving CBT), which is given as many as 3 sessions before the national exam. The intervention began with psychoeducation by presenting 2 videos about student anxiety, anxiety theory, and its handling. Then proceed with the practice of various techniques, including progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, imagery, positive self-talk, and rewards.

Cognitive and behavioral techniques were taken from various sources and given additional positive self-talk sticker techniques which were the researchers' ideas as a reward. In general for a given technique, keep using some of the approaches/components of CBT from Stallard (2002). The researcher exemplifies the steps of the various CBT techniques used, which the students then follow. After that, it was repeated 1 time. The duration of session 1 is 150 minutes, sessions 2 and 3 are 50 minutes on different days. After the participants were given the intervention (CBT), it was continued with the post-test stage, to know the participants' level of anxiety after being given the intervention as well as seeing the effectiveness of CBT. Post-tests are given to participants using the same measuring instruments, namely WTAS and open-ended questions. Interviews were also conducted with the principal and the 6th grade coordinator.

3. Research Result

Based on the analysis, the t value was 3,260 with a significance value of 0.003 ($p < 0.05$). This shows that Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) is effective in reducing anxiety of 6th grade elementary school students who will face the national exam. For changes in the participants' level of anxiety between before and after being given the intervention, it can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Anxiety level analysis

Anxiety Level	WTAS Score	Number of Participants			
		Pre test	%	Post test	%
Low test anxiety	1.0-1.9	0	0	2	8
Normal test anxiety	2.0-2.5	0	0	10	42
High normal anxiety	2.5-2.9	11	46	4	17
Moderatly high	3.0-3.4	11	46	7	29
High test anxiety	3.5-3.9	2	8	1	4

Based on table 1, it can be seen that after the CBT intervention was carried out, there was a decrease in the number of participants who experienced anxiety facing the test for high normal anxiety category from 46% to 17%, moderatly high from 46% to 29%, and high test anxiety from 8% to 4%. whereas there was an increase in the low anxiety category from 0% to 8% and normal test anxiety from 0% to 42%.

Tabel 2. Pre-test answer results regarding what participants feel when facing the national examination

Question	Theme	Pre Test	
		Total	Description
What do you feel when you want to face the national exam?	Afraid	8	A little afraid, afraid of bad grades, worried, fear of not graduating, Afraid of bad grades, fear of not getting junior high school and being scolded by parents, afraid of knowing the results, afraid of not graduating
	Physiological response	6	Trembling when writing, nausea, dizziness, heart palpitations, upset stomach, not focus

	Tense	1	Tense
	Nervous	1	Nervous
	Confused	1	Confused
	Restless	1	Feeling restless
	Anxious	1	Anxious
	Forget	1	Forgot the lesson
	Panic	1	little panic
	Sad	1	Sad
	Disturbed	1	Disturbed
	Stress	1	Sometime stress

Based on table 2. the researcher summarizes the results of the open-ended questions. Before doing the CBT intervention, the majority of participants experienced various negative feelings or emotions of fear and worry, such as fear of bad grades, fear of failing to pass, fear of bad grades, fear of not getting junior high school, some others experienced physiological responses, such as dizziness, nausea, nervousness, abdominal pain, and tremors.

Table 3. Results of post test answers regarding what participants feel when facing the national examination

Question	Theme	Post Test	
		Total	Description
What do you feel when you want to face the national exam?	Calm	12	Being calmer, knowing how to calm down
	Anxious	7	Become less anxious
	Relax	5	Know how to become relax when in an anxious situation

Based on table 3, the researcher summarizes the results of open-ended questions. After the CBT intervention, the majority of participants felt calmer, less anxious and more relaxed.

Table 4. Results of pre test answers what is done to overcome anxiety

Question	Theme	Pre Test	
		Total	Description
What is done to deal with anxiety?	Study	8	Study, study a lot, study hard
	Rest	7	Give adequate rest time, rest, sleep
	Play	7	Play not too much, play freely, play for a while
	Pray	2	Pray and keep try, pray not to get tense

Based on table 4, it can be seen that prior to the CBT intervention, all participants had not used a psychological approach to dealing with anxiety.

Table 5. Results of the Post Test Answers what is done to overcome anxiety

Question	Theme	Post Test	
		Total	Description
What is done to deal with anxiety?	Relaxation	9	*Progressive muscle relaxation*
	Deep	8	*Deep breathing*
	Positive	7	*Positive self talk*

Based on table 5, it can be seen that after the CBT intervention 9 participants choose to use progressive muscle relaxation to deal with anxiety, while 8 participants preferred to use deep brething and 7 participants chose to use positive self-talk.

Table 6. Thematic analysis of principal and class coordinator interview results

Source	Theme	Before Intervention	After Intervention
		Description	Description
Principal	Score	The tryout score of the students was low	Student score increase
	Student achievement	Dissatisfied with student achievement	Satisfied with the student results and asked to be held back for the next batch
Class coordinator for class 6A, 6B and 6C	Feelings of worry	Worried about low student grades and judging students as unprepared	It is calmer because students are better prepared with the psychological techniques being taught

Based on table 6. it is known that before CBT intervention, the principal was dissatisfied with the results of several try-out times with low student scores on the lessons to be tested for the National Examination. This try-out is carried out by the school in collaboration with external parties before the UN takes place. This caused the principal to ask researchers for help so that students were more prepared when facing the UN so that their scores could be maximized, then after the CBT intervention, the principal admitted that he was satisfied with the results obtained by students with an increase in the grades of grade 6 students who took the UN and requested that the CBT Intervention be carried out again for the next generation. Meanwhile, the results of interviews with slass coordinators for classes 6A, 6B, and 6C showed that there was concern with low student scores during the tryout because students were psychologically unprepared, but after the CBT intervention, the coordinator claimed to be calmer because the students were more prepared with the psychological techniques that were used. taught.

4. Discussion

The anxiety experienced by the 6th grade students of SD Quantum Indonesia is anxiety caused when they are going to face the national exam (UN). Anxiety when facing a test is called test anxiety. According to Spielberger (1972) test anxiety arises when a person is faced with a situation that is felt to be threatening, is

temporary, and is characterized by subjective feelings of certain pressures, nervousness, and an active central nervous system. Based on the principles/models of CBT (Wilding & Milne, 2013), it is not the national exam (UN) event that affects the feelings and behavior of students, but the students' thoughts (cognition) in interpreting the national exam events which ultimately affect their feelings and behavior. Based on the results of the WTAS scale and open questions, in general, the situation that was felt to be threatening to the students was caused by negative automatic thoughts that were irrational to the national exam.

According to Beck (2011), negative thoughts are automatically characterized by cognitive distortion in this study in the form of catastrophizing, which is imagining something bad happening, where the majority of students in grade 6 at SD Quantum Indonesia claim to be worried that they are afraid of forgetting material that has been studied, afraid of not graduating, afraid of not getting junior high school. what they want, and are afraid of getting a bad score, thus affecting their feelings with the emergence of negative emotional responses in the form of anxiety, stress, nervousness, fear, and physiological responses, namely shaking, dizziness, stomachache, tension, nervousness, then if allowed to continue will affect their behavior by inhibiting student performance when working on questions, so that they cannot perform at their best, and lead to failure to get maximum scores. This is also a complaint of the principal and class coordinator teacher of 6th grade because every time a try-out is carried out, the students' scores are not satisfactory.

Based on open questions, students have not used a psychological approach to prepare themselves to overcome anxiety about national exams, so researchers try to provide CBT interventions to students by using several CBT techniques that refer to Stallard (2002), which provides psychoeducation about the problems at hand. students and their handlers using CBT intervention for 3x sessions with a break of each session between 1-2 weeks. According to Stallard (2002) although generally CBT sessions for children are carried out for 12-16 sessions, clinicians' experience suggests that sessions be made shorter, where significant changes can be obtained with 6 sessions or less. This is in line with the explanation from Putranto (2016) if based on practical experience in Indonesia, the number of 12 sessions is very difficult to do because the therapy process is too long, expensive and tedious, and reduces patient confidence in the ability of his therapist which can result in therapy failure. In each pause students are given homework to repeat independently the CBT techniques that have been taught by looking at the training module provided, 3x this session is carried out before the UN (national exam) is held.

Researchers teach cognitive techniques with positive self-talk to replace negative students' thoughts with more positive thoughts. According to Conforti (in Repass, 2017) positive thinking techniques are recommended to release anxiety. Researchers also taught affective management with relaxation techniques to reduce the degree of tension in the body so that students can relax more with proper breathing techniques (deep breathing) so that more oxygen enters the body so that blood flow will run smoothly. Conforti (in Repass, 2017) suggests relaxing techniques, such as deep breathing exercises which can also positively reduce anxiety, this is in line with research conducted by Borchard (in Repass, 2017) where breathing exercises have the advantage of requiring a short time.

Affective management is also carried out with progressive muscle relaxation techniques, namely by tightening and loosening the muscles at certain points of the body, as well as imagery techniques with goal rehearsal imagery, here students are asked to visualize themselves being able to calmly work on questions and succeed in doing national exams so that they get a satisfactory value guided by the researcher. According to Hall-Flavin (in Repass, 2017) when students have high test anxiety, relaxation techniques by doing muscle relaxation and visualizing good test results can reduce anxiety. At the end of the intervention, the students were given a reward in the form of a positive self-talk sticker whose words were taken from the positive self-talk that had been made by each student so that students were more enthusiastic and optimistic in facing the national examination.

CBT interventions that have been carried out by researchers were tested empirically to see whether CBT was effective in reducing the anxiety of 6th grade elementary school students who were about to face the national examination. Based on the results of hypothesis testing in this study, it shows that the research

hypothesis is accepted, CBT is effective in reducing the anxiety of 6th grade elementary school students who will face the national examination. The success factors in reducing anxiety in research include the approach taken by researchers to students according to the age of student development. Although CBT is quite complicated and complex, many tasks given in CBT require the ability to reason about concrete things compared to abstract thinking concepts (Harrington, in Stallard, 2002). The operational concrete stage in children's cognitive development that is reached at the age of approximately 7 years is considered sufficient to carry out basic tasks on CBT (Verdyun, in Stallard, 2002). Researchers used role-play techniques to make it easier for students to learn CBT techniques with repetition, besides the reward promised at the end of the training to students also triggered them to be eager to learn and repeat this CBT at home.

According to Young and Brown (in Stallard, 2002), CBT has been quite frequent in children from 101 CBT interventions performed, 79% of which were carried out in children under 10 years of age (Durlak, 1991). CBT is then considered effective in teaching children to understand how thoughts can contribute to anxiety, as well as teaching how to modify maladaptive thoughts in order to reduce anxiety (Kendall, in Mash & Wolfe, 2005)

5. Conclusion

This study aims to test the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) to reducing anxiety of 6Th grade elementary school students who will face the national exam. The results of the study based on the results of the paired-sample t-test, the t value was 3,260 with a significance value of 0.003 ($p < 0.05$). These results indicate that CBT is effective in reducing anxiety in facing national exams in 6th grade elementary school students. The results of the study can also be seen from the analysis of the level of anxiety, which shows that after participating in the training, there is a decrease in the number of students with moderatly high and high anxiety categories (13 to 8 people) and in the high normal anxiety (11 to 4 people). The number of participants with anxiety in the normal and low categories is increasing (from 0 to 12 people). In addition, the results of the open-ended questions which were reinforced by the evaluation results showed that before the CBT intervention the majority of participants experienced various negative feelings or emotions, fear and worry, such as fear of bad grades, fear of not passing, fear of bad grades, fear of not getting junior high school others experienced physiological responses, such as dizziness, nausea, abdominal pain and shaking, but after the CBT intervention the majority of participants felt calmer, less anxious and more relaxed. This is in line with the results of interviews with school principals and class coordinators for classes 6A, 6B, and 6C who claimed to be satisfied with the results obtained by students with an increase in the grades of grade 6 students who took the national examination and asked that the CBT Intervention be carried out again for the next batch.

6. Suggestion

Based on the results of this study, the suggestions that can be conveyed are as follows:

a. Future research is expected to take into account other factors (secondary variables) that may affect student anxiety apart from CBT.
b. The filling in the scale given to the child participants needs to be more guided so that there is no misinterpretation.
c. Because the participants are children, measurements can also be made as interesting as possible, for example with a picture of a thermometer to measure the level of anxiety and bubble thought / bubble text as a place to fill in what is thought, felt, and done when anxious.
d. The need for giving homework by providing CBT worksheets and agenda of daily activities at the end of each intervention session for students to fill in at home and report the results in the next session.

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