

The effects of expressive writing therapy on adolescent bullied teens' anxiety levels

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Abstract

Background: Bullying victims in Indonesia It is still commonly used, which leads to stress, melancholy, and even suicidal thoughts. In the nine years between 2011 and 2019, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission received reports of 37,381 cases of abuse. According to data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI), there were 226 bullying cases reported in 2022, compared to 119 cases in 2020. The three types of bullying that people experience are verbal (29.3%), physical (55.5%), and psychological (15.2%).

Method: a study design combined with quantitative research. Using a quasi-experimental design, this study is quantitative in nature. Utilizing a control group design, a pre- and post-test approach is employed. The study population consisted of adolescents, aged 13 to 16, who had experienced bullying in the Pringsewu district.

Results: Based on the statistical test results above, which had a p-value of $0.000 \leq 0.05$, it can be concluded that Expressive Writing Therapy significantly lowers anxiety levels both before and after it is implemented.

Conclusion: According to the findings of the studies conducted, expressive writing therapy significantly lowers anxiety levels in teenage bullying victims.

Keywords: Expressive Writing Therapy; Anxiety; Teenagers; Bullying

INTRODUCTION

Adolescents, who typically range in age from 10 to 18, are also referred to as preschoolers. You can think of adolescence as the time between childhood and adulthood. Bullying frequently takes place during this time, either directly or indirectly (1).

When According to UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund), among teenagers over the age of 15, 18% of bullying incidents involved other students hitting or ordering them around, 22% involving other students taking or destroying their belongings, 14% involving threats, 22% involving other students taunting them, 19% involving the exclusion of classmates, and as much as 20% involving the spread of unfavorable rumors (2)

Over the last nine years, from 2011 to 2019, the Indonesian Child Protection Commission has documented 37,381 cases of abuse. While this was going on, bullying

cases were reported in 2020 as 119, in 2021 as 53, and in 2022 as 226 according to data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) and the Federation of Indonesian Teachers' Unions (FSGI). Specifically, bullying that is physical (55.5%), verbal (29.3%), and psychological (15.2%) are the types of bullying that people experience (3). Bullying victims continue to experience this on a regular basis in Indonesia, which leads to stress, despair, and even suicide attempts.

According to data provided by the Coordinator for the Strengthening and Development of Institutions Offering Women and Child Protection Services, there were 42 cases in 2022 and 38 cases in 2023 (3). Bullying cases were reported in Lampung Province alone; there were four cases in 2022, seven cases from 2022 to 2023, and cases of bullying in 2023. 4. One detrimental

effect of bullying is that it can lead to excessive anxiety.

A form of violence and an unequal power dynamic between the victim and the bully are common characteristics of bullying, which can occur individually or in groups and is defined as aggressive behavior and manipulative actions. An individual's personal, family, social, and environmental circumstances can all contribute to their violent and oppressive behavior (3). Fear, frustration, helplessness, loneliness, isolation from other people, and anxiety are some of the psychological effects that happen and are experienced (5). Across the globe, bullying is a health issue. Based on the study's findings, it can be concluded that anti-intervention bullying in schools works to lessen bullying victims' mental health issues in the next generation (6).

Anxiety is a unique kind of disorder characterized by a person's discomfort in crowded areas and excessive worry about what other people may think of them. In addition to emotional (feelings of fear, anxiety, and discomfort), cognitive (difficulty concentrating, anxiety, and turning things around, unrealistic), and behavioral (increased hostility, aggressive, avoidant), physical symptoms include muscle tension, rapid breathing, excessive dryness, and dry mouth (7).

Expressive writing therapy is one treatment that can be used to lower anxiety. Through writing therapy, people can better understand who they are and get over feelings of anxiety, sadness, or depression. By employing language and vocabulary in different ways based on their emotions, writing therapy can also help victims feel more free (7)

Considering the prevalence of bullying and the sheer volume of cases Teens in Indonesia require appropriate therapy, such as Expressive Writing Therapy. This type of therapy is necessary because victims of bullying typically experience extreme anxiety when they have to disclose their experiences to others. In addition, they frequently fear the threats made by the bullies. If this phenomenon is not addressed right away, teens may experience negative effects such

as reduced IQ, increased anxiety, and even a desire to take their own lives.

METHOD

Methods contain an explanation of the research approach, study subjects, the research procedure's conduct, the use of materials and instruments, data collection, and analysis techniques. It should be described in detail and operationally in 5-6 paragraphs.

RESULTS

1) Pre-Test and Post-Test Anxiety Tests for Bullying Victims

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test on victims bullying

| | Paired Samples Test | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|---|-------|--------|----|------|--|
| | Paired Differences | | | | | t | df | Sig. | |
| | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | | | |
| Lower | Upper | | | | | | | | |
| Pretest - Posttest | -.554 | .817 | .085 | -.724 | -.385 | -6.509 | 91 | .000 | |

Data Source: 2024

Based on the outcomes of the aforementioned pretest and posttest using statistical testing Test using Paired Samples One gets the p-value.000 ≤ 0.05, suggesting a substantial impact on lowering anxiety levels both before and after the procedure Writing Therapy with Expression

DISCUSSION

1) The Increase in Anxiety of Bullying Victims Through Expressive Writing Therapy

The p-value is derived from the above statistical test results.000 ≤ 0.05, it can be inferred that there is a noteworthy impact on lowering anxiety levels both prior to and following Expressive Writing Therapy. Therapy expressive writing is a therapeutic or medical practice that involves writing about one's emotions in an effort to lower stress or anxiety levels in people, particularly in teenagers. This study involved 92 students who were victims of bullying in the Ambarawa District, Pringsewu Regency, Lampung

Province. The participants ranged in age from 13 to 15 years.

The period of time between childhood and adolescence known as adolescence is marked by healthy physical, mental, emotional, and social development. Because of the demands for adaptation and changes in growth and development, adolescence can also be seen as a problematic time of life (8).

Another name for adolescence is puberty, which concludes with the adult process. Adolescent development and growth can be categorized into three phases: early adolescents, who are typically 12–14 years old, middle adolescents, who are 14–17 years old, and late adolescents, who are 17–20 years old. The formation of a self-identity is a hallmark of these developmental shifts. Adolescence presents a number of new roles that inspire you to express yourself and create a new identity (9). In the process of figuring out who they are, teenagers exhibit both positive and negative behaviors. One common example of negative behavior among teenagers is bullying.

Bullying is a type of power abuse that involves verbal, physical, and social actions that have the potential to cause physical and psychological harm to the target. Action bullying can take many forms and involve multiple individual or group members. It can be done in person or online, and it can be done overtly or covertly. The cycle of violence can be prolonged by bullying. Children who witness bullying due to sacrifices have a propensity to act out bullying toward others, and this may recur in the future (10).

Additional effects of bullying on victims include a variety of disorders, such as low psychological well-being, which makes the victim feel uneasy, terrified, unworthy, and low on self-esteem (10). One more effect of bullying that affects both the victim and the bully is that the bully may sustain physical harm as a result of mischievous behavior (delinquent). Bullying victims may experience psychological effects such as feeling alone, scared, irritated, helpless, and rejected by others (10). Other negative effects on bullying exist in addition to that. Victimized students

will find it difficult to make friends, shy away from school, miss a lot of classes due to fear of being judged, find it difficult to focus in class, and suffer both immediate and long-term consequences, both psychologically and physically (11).

The facts are the case bullying in teenagers it is still very common, deep-rooted, passed down from generation to generation and often less monitored by parents and schools. Form bullying which is often done in the form of teasing, hitting peers, this is a form of entertainment for behavior in playing and socializing (12).

One of the symptoms that frequently follows harassment or bullying is anxiety. Anxiety is a condition characterized by restlessness, worry, tension, uncertainty, insecurity, and fear resulting from events that are viewed as threats but whose true cause is uncertain (13). Somatic symptoms like breathlessness, elevated heart rate, insomnia, nausea, tremors, and dizziness are additional indicators of anxiety disorders. Headaches, perspiration, tightness in the chest, palpitations, and mild gastrointestinal issues are examples of autonomic symptoms. Anxiety's peripheral symptoms include dizziness, diarrhea, floating, excessive perspiration, hypertension, pupillary mydriasis, hyperreflexia, tachycardia, restlessness, fainting, tremors, itching in the extremities, and frequent urination. Anxious symptoms vary from person to person (13)

Since bullying can lead to anxiety, efforts can be taken to lower the anxiety level, one method of which is through expressive writing, one of the many forms of psychological therapy. The findings of studies on the application of best practices, particularly the use of expressive writing to address bullying behavior. The outcomes of the students' expressive writing revealed that the majority of them were able to convey feelings of annoyance at the bully's actions as well as sadness and sympathy for the victim of bullying (14).

Test results for the experimental group's Paired Sample T-test pre- and post-tests were $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$), indicating that there was

an impact following therapy expressive writing. A variation in average value of 12.73 supported a total of 8 interventions. Findings from studies on therapeutic expressive writing show that it can effectively lower anxiety in teenagers who are being bullied. On the other hand, the pre- and post-test results for the control group showed $p = 0.052$ ($p > 0.05$), suggesting no discernible change following therapy. The variation in average value of 0.95(15) supports the use of expressive writing.

based on the findings of the Mann-Whitney U-Test statistical analysis With a significance level of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$), the obtained r result was -3.247, indicating a difference in anxiety between the experimental and control groups. Based on the study's findings, it can be said that treating bullying victims' anxiety levels with expressive writing exercises is beneficial (4). The Paired Samples T Test yielded statistical test results of 0.000, indicating a significant relationship between the pre- and post-test. The results of the pre- and post-tests indicate a significant relationship between the two, indicating that anxiety levels have decreased following treatment or intervention (16).

CONCLUSIONS

It is possible for anyone, anywhere, to express themselves through writing. One way that writing can help with anxiety reduction is through expressing emotions through writing. To improve understanding of oneself and others, people can also use writing as a tool for self-communication. The person can write about experiences and events that have happened to him, even if they were good or bad. He can particularly write about events that have an effect on his anxiety. To keep their experience private, introverts can use writing as a friend to communicate their innermost thoughts.

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