

IMPLEMENTATION OF WRITING THERAPY IN OVERCOMING SELF-HARM BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

Self-harm is an action taken by someone to harm or injure themselves. Usually, self-harm is carried out by someone using sharp or blunt objects around them. This self-harm behavior is carried out intentionally with the sufferer's awareness and aims to obtain personal satisfaction. The therapy method that will be used in this case is Writing Therapy. The aim of this research is to see the effectiveness of writing therapy in reducing the frequency of self-harm that occurs in individuals. This research uses a qualitative research design with a descriptive narrative approach as a data analysis technique and data collection techniques in the form of interviews and documentation. The participant in this research was a teenage girl who had engaged in self-harm behavior with one significant other. The results of this research reveal three discussion topics, namely the description of self-harm behavior, the factors that cause self-harm behavior - and efforts to reduce self-harm behavior through writing therapy. Writing itself has its own power because writing is a form of exploration and expression of areas of thought, emotion and spirituality which can be used as a means to communicate with oneself and develop thoughts and awareness of an event.

Keywords: Self-harm, Writing therapy

Introduction

Adolescence is the age at which individuals integrate with adult society and no longer feel below their parents' level (Hurlock, 1998). They are considered capable of making decisions for themselves compared to children. Likewise, in determining daily behavior, a teenager is expected and considered capable of being responsible for his behavior. However, this condition is not easy to achieve because there are many problems that arise during adolescence. One of the problems during adolescence is the emergence of depression which can be caused by several factors such as less harmonious relationships with parents, traumatic childhood experiences, and lack of relationships with peers (Santrock, 2003). Currently, depression has become a disease burden in the 15-44 year age category for both men and women. It is estimated that around 20 percent of children and adolescents worldwide experience mental problems including depression. However, although the prevalence of depression is quite large, only less than 25 percent of those diagnosed with depression have access to effective treatment. An even greater number are those who are undetected. Therefore, depression is often referred to as "the silent epidemic" (Fitri. 2011).

One of the typical characteristics of adolescent development is that emotions become more unstable (Santrock, 2002). Teenagers' inability to control their emotions, which become more unstable, can lead to mood disorders such as depression. This is in accordance with the statement from Smith and Taysen (1994, in Hayatussofiyyah, 2016) who said that there are many teenagers who actually give inappropriate appreciation when faced with a problem. They give appreciation to

the problem precisely by hurting themselves and they believe this method can provide momentary calm and be able to free them from the psychological pain they are experiencing. Based on the explanation in PPDGJ-III, self-injury is one of the symptoms of depression (Department of Health, 1993).

Writing is an activity that creates thoughts and feelings through writing. Writing is different from speaking. Writing has its own power because writing is a form of exploration and expression of areas of thought, emotion and spirituality which can be used as a means to communicate with oneself and develop thoughts and awareness of an event. Writing therapy also reflects the subject's reflection and expression due to his own initiative or suggestion from a therapist (Susilowati, 2017). Positive ability writing therapy is a therapeutic process using the method of writing about strengths or abilities. to be proud of, the achievements they have achieved (at school, at work, at home) and the pleasant things about themselves (positive traits, healthy body condition), from the family (loving each other, caring for each other), from the environment (neighbors, mutual respect). Positive skills writing therapy is defined as a therapy with the activity of writing positive thoughts and feelings into writing, the individual can begin to change attitudes, increase creativity, activate memory, improve performance and life satisfaction (Susilowati, 2017).

The effect of writing therapy activities on health can be shown by a decrease in the activity of the autonomic and cardiovascular nervous systems as experienced by individuals in the relaxation process. This condition can be explained from the perspective of inhibition theory which states that, harboring thoughts and feelings regarding traumatic experiences results in the accumulation of pressure or stress in the body and increased physiological activity, obsessive thinking related to stressful events so that in the long term it can cause the individual to always being in a stressful situation and feeling socially threatened (Danarti, 2018).

Writing therapy can facilitate emotional regulation through task mechanisms, namely directing attention and helping cognitive restructuring. Directing attention is related to diverting attention or the center of thoughts that are bothering a person to other things that can make a person's state of mind better (Susilowati, 2011). When stressed, the brain actually orders the amygdala to release the hormones Adrenocorticotrophic Hormone (ACTH), Corticotropin Releasing Hormone (CRH), and cortisol which can disturb the body's balance, so that people who experience stress often look gloomy and their minds are empty.

Diverting attention by writing on paper can make the brain work more actively (Susilowati, 2011). In this case, the hormone dopamine plays a very important role in the thinking process (cognitive). This hormone is produced in the hypothalamus and is produced in several areas of the brain, including the substantia nigra and the ventral tegmental area. Dopamine is also a neurohormone released by the hypothalamus. The hormone dopamine has many functions in the brain, including important roles in behavior and cognition, voluntary movement, motivation, reward, sleep, mood, attention, and learning.

Method

This research uses a qualitative research method with a descriptive narrative approach. Qualitative research is defined as research that uses an interpretive or theoretical framework that

forms the study of research problems regarding the meaning that certain individuals or groups have on human or social problems (Creswell, John W., 2015). In this research, researchers used a descriptive narrative design. Where the researcher attempts to describe some or all of the individual's experiences related to self-harm behavior, the relationship between one storyline and other storylines, as well as understanding the benefits and lessons from the events that the individual has gone through.

The way researchers obtain research subjects is that researchers distribute broadcasts via social media such as Instagram and WhatsApp containing invitations to sufferers of self-harm behavior with predetermined criteria to become participants. This broadcast was distributed to people around the researcher. Based on the results of the research broadcast, there were 4 people who contacted the researcher and were willing to become participants. However, of the four people, only 1 person met all the criteria as the subject of this research.

The research subject criteria determined are as follows. teenagers aged 18-22 years; male or female, and the perpetrator of self-harm is a teenager who has carried out self-harm or self-injurious behavior. After going through the selection process, 1 research subject was obtained who was willing to apply writing therapy and who fully met the research criteria. The research subject this time with the pseudonym Ara is 19 years old and the first form of self-harm was carried out, namely using staples clipped to the fingers, and the last one was carried out in August 2022. Then the second form of self-harm which was still carried out until May 2024 was, consuming medicines such as paracetamol and antimo to help you sleep and calm your mind.

Furthermore, this research uses data collection techniques using interviews and documentation. The interviews conducted in this research were semi-structured interviews with research subjects. The documentation study used in this research is in the form of photos and audio records of research subjects during the interview. The data analysis technique used in this research is descriptive narrative. According to Webster and Metrova (2007), narrative is a research method in the social sciences. As a distinctive form of qualitative research, narrative research usually focuses on the study of one person or a single individual and how that individual gives meaning to their experiences through telling stories, collecting data by collecting stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences. for individuals (Cresswell, 2012).

Results

Descriptive research subject, based on data analysis from the interview results, a description of the research subject and the problems that occur in detail is obtained. The subject with the pseudonym Ara is 19 years old. Ara is the first daughter of 4 siblings. Ara's family is a harmonious family and she is close to both parents. Since childhood, Ara has been accustomed to being pampered by her parents. When Ara does something that makes her parents proud, she will be rewarded in the form of a gift, but when Ara does not obey her parents' wishes, she will be physically punished by her parents. This makes him a little selfish and stubborn because everything he wants is always fulfilled. After Ara became a teenager, she accidentally saw her classmate's finger hit by a staple. Ara, who at that time was having problems with her family, felt inspired to do this, because she saw her friend who was not in pain, making her think that if she did the same

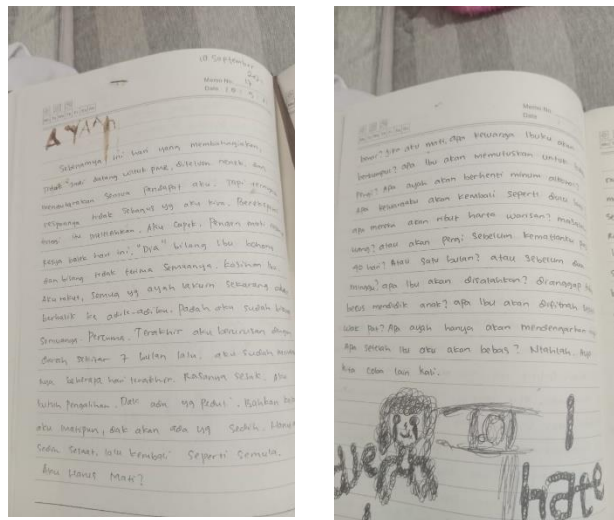
thing, she would not feel pain and there would be no significant scars. Since then, his life began to change. Ara made this act of self-harm a place for her to express all the emotions she felt.

Descriptive research findings will be divided into three major themes, namely, description of self-harm behavior, factors causing self-harm behavior, and efforts to reduce self-harm behavior in adolescent girls. The research results can be seen as follows:

A. Description of Self-harm Behavior

- Form self-harm behavior

There are various forms of self-harm behavior carried out by research subjects. The research subjects hurt themselves by sticking their fingers into staples, using drugs regularly, peeling the skin of their lips, and deliberately pulling their hair. The following is the documentation in 2021 that Ara has carried out as follows:



Gambar 1.1
Ara's blood-stained diary

- Intensity of self-harm behavior

Intensity can be measured by how long the duration and how often self-harm actions are carried out by research subjects. It takes Ara about half an hour to clamp her finger using staples, in a week Ara can do this 4-5 times. However, consuming paracetamol has a more frequent duration. Namely, when Ara cannot sleep and feels that her head is noisy, Ara will consume 4-5 paracetamol/antimo. Something that Ara still does to this day.

- Feelings when engaging in self-harm behavior

The feeling that Ara felt when she was carrying out self-harm behavior was that Ara felt relieved and happy, when she saw the wound and blood flowing down her hand, she felt that she was still alive. But after that Ara cried.

- Impact of self-harm behavior

Most of the impacts obtained as a result of self-harm actions carried out by the subject are positive for him. The subject felt relieved and satisfied because he had succeeded in expressing his emotions in a self-harm way. The subject has not felt

or even ignored the negative impact of the self-harm action. This encourages the subject to continue carrying out self-harm behavior to this day.

B. Factors that cause self-harm behavior

- Family problem

Every family definitely has its own problems. As a child, of course you want a happy and harmonious family. When faced with problems that involve the extended family, children are not necessarily ready to go through them. In this case, Ara was the victim of an argument between her parents which was interfered with by other parties from her father's family such as her grandfather, grandmother and uncle.

C. Efforts to reduce self-harm behavior

- Keep away from staples

The subject of this research, Ara, is aware that her self-harm behavior is not good if it continues and becomes a habit. Therefore, Ara has a strategy to reduce or even stop this self-harm behavior. The strategy that Ara used was to keep the staples out of her sight. When Ara saw the staples she really restrained herself from using the staples in the wrong way. What Ara did was proven to be able to stop him from committing self-harm.

- Study psychology

Ara studied psychology to study the importance of mental health and coping strategies as Ara's efforts to reduce self-harm behavior. Through this, Ara learned that it is important to have awareness of mental health.

- Social support

A teenager who gets social support from those closest to him will develop in a positive and healthy way. Getting social support from the surrounding environment can also help teenage girls stop engaging in self-harm behavior. In this case, Ara received emotional support in the form of care and attention from close friends. Finally, Ara was slowly able to reduce her self-harm behavior.

- Get closer to Allah SWT

Drawing closer to Allah SWT is also one of the efforts made by the subjects of this research to reduce self-harm behavior. Ara makes efforts to reduce self-harm behavior by praying tahajud and regularly reading the Al-Quran for about 2 pages after prayer.

- Keep yourself busy

The subject deliberately kept herself busy by joining external campus organizations so that at night he felt tired and it would be easier to sleep. This can also make Ara not have free time to carry out self-harm actions.

- Write diary

Subject with a background who has loved writing since he was in elementary school. The subject admitted that his writing intensity had decreased when the subject entered semester 3. However, now the subject felt that it was very helpful

to reapply writing therapy as directed by the researcher. Ara will write when she feels her day is tiring and hard, she writes before bed, Ara feels calm and quite relieved after pouring out her emotions in the notebook she has.

Discussion

The first time the subjects in this study engaged in self-harm behavior was when the subjects entered junior high school, specifically class IX. Where the participant was 13 years old, who was a teenager, with an unstable emotional condition and was seen as a transition period from childhood to adulthood which took place between the ages of 12 and 20 years (Brooks, 2011). The various problems faced make teenagers experience difficulty in controlling their emotions, thereby disrupting their daily activities. This research discusses adolescent girls who engage in self-harm behavior by focusing on the causal factors. According to Santrock (2018), teenagers are individuals who are in a transition period in human life from childhood to adulthood. A teenager already has his own desires, so in this case the teenager is learning to be independent and make his own decisions. However, teenagers also need to be accompanied by their parents in their maturation process because their emotions are not yet stable or are often called unstable. So that the decisions they take can be correct and not harm themselves. Adolescence is also a time when someone explores their world and searches for their true identity (Papalia & Feldman, 2015).

According to Glen and Klonsky (2013), the emergence of self-injurious behavior is found in early adolescence. A teenager who has problems in emotional regulation will engage in maladaptive ways that are detrimental to themselves to reduce the anxiety that arises (Weis, R., 2018). This means that teenagers can overcome their emotional problems by engaging in self-harm behavior. They think that it is better to feel physical pain or injury than psychological or emotional pain (Kurniawati, 2012). Self-harm behavior can be said to be maladaptive coping carried out by teenagers to deal with current problems (Jenny, 2016). Self-harm is the act of intentionally hurting and injuring oneself to overcome emotional stress or painful feelings (Klonsky, 2011).

Ara carried out a form of self-harm behavior in the form of superficial self-mutilation by injuring her hands with sharp objects such as staples, pulling her hair and peeling her lips. In general, the factor that dominates the causes of self-harm behavior found in research subjects is self-harm as emotion focused coping. Maidah (2013) states that self-injury behavior can start from confusion regarding how to channel the negative emotions that are felt. Some people think that hurting themselves can be a temporary distraction from the pain caused by the emotional wounds they have experienced. At first the subject was still able to hold back the negative emotions he felt, but there were many motivating factors for the subject to carry out self-harm behavior, one of which was family problems. The subject and his family are often linked by several individuals from his father's extended family, such as the subject's grandfather, grandmother and uncle. Coupled with the subject's father's bad habits (consuming alcohol) which made the subject feel increasingly irritated and in the end the subject chose to hurt himself as a way and outlet for the pain he felt.

Ara hurts or injures herself with the aim of venting the emotions she feels when she is dealing with a certain problem. According to Mullis and Chapman (2000), the factor that can cause someone to engage in self-harm behavior is emotion focus coping (Thesalonika & Apsari, 2021).

This can be interpreted that a teenage girl tends to solve problems by minimizing the pressure she feels in order to feel calm and safe by hurting or injuring herself. It can be seen from the research results that Ara feels relieved and satisfied when she expresses her emotions through self-harm behavior. The statement made by the subject supports the opinion of Kurniawaty (2012) which states that the perpetrator of self-injury enjoys the feeling of release because he has carried out his desire to channel his emotions.

Awareness that self-harm is not a good behavior and is detrimental, gives rise to hope in the subject that they can stop doing self-harm and can live a better life. Ancok (in Maryeni, 2017) states that the emergence of hope in life is one of the beginnings in the process of discovering and achieving the meaning of life. The subject tries to change his emotional stress coping strategy by carrying out various kinds of directed and positive activities, such as giving positive affirmations to himself by the subject and trying to love himself more as well as carrying out activities that can divert the subject's attention such as joining an organization so that the subject does not have free time to commit acts of self-harm. Changing a person's attitude or behavior as a strategy for adapting to the demands and dynamics of life is one component of a successful search for the meaning of life (Bastaman, 2007). And the subject also tries to be more religious by praying and getting closer to Allah SWT. Religious religious behavior, such as praying, religious rituals, or observing the sunnah, can provide comfort and be considered as meaning in facing life threats that make a person stressed and anxious (Qolbi, 2020).

Apart from that, the subject also tried to find and receive social support from the people closest to him. Seeking emotional social support is an individual's attempt to calm themselves by talking to someone about what they feel, seeking emotional support from people around them, discussing their feelings with other people, and trying to get sympathy and understanding from someone (Carver et al., 1989). This social support is able to raise awareness that the people around him are worried and cared about. Cobb (in Christoffersen et al., 2015) said that positive social support can make someone confident that they are cared for, loved and appreciated by their environment. Social environmental support such as from parents, friends or close friends also influences a person's decision to seek help (Rickwood et al., 2005).

Based on the research results in this study, the subject stated that applying writing therapy could reduce feelings of unease, noise and anxiety which could trigger negative thoughts or the urge to carry out self-harm actions. By writing, the subject feels that his emotions are channeled into the notebook he has. The results of this research are in line with research conducted by Maulidia & Annatagia (2019) entitled expressive writing therapy to reduce depression in adolescents who commit self-injury. The result is that it can be concluded that writing therapy is effective in reducing depression in adolescents who commit self-injury at SMP X Yogyakarta.

The results of this research also support the results of research conducted by Susilowati & Hasanat (2011) with the title research on the effect of writing therapy on emotional experiences on reducing depression in first year students. The results show that Emotional Experience Writing Therapy has been proven to reduce depression in first year students. A decrease in depression occurred after carrying out all therapy (post-test) and one week after the therapy was completed (Follow up). This is also in accordance with research from Baikie & Wilhelm (2005) which shows that writing expressively about emotional experiences will provide short and long term benefits.

The short-term benefits are related to reducing stress levels, while the long-term benefits are related to improving mood and feeling better psychological well-being.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this research, the subject stated that applying writing therapy could reduce feelings of unease, noise and restlessness which could trigger negative thoughts or the urge to carry out self-harm actions. Then it can be concluded that the self-harm behavior carried out by these teenage girls is a type of superficial self-mutilation or scratching certain body parts, especially the hands. A teenage girl who engages in self-harm behavior is caused by several factors and not just one factor. The causal factor that dominates the emergence of self-harm behavior in adolescent girls is self-harm as emotion focus coping.

During the intervention process, participants reduced the intensity of self-harm behavior and the subject also said that the self-harm actions he had carried out so far were wrong and could not be justified. The implication of this research is that participants can express their emotions again through writing in their notebooks, so they can be more open and honest with themselves. And there will be many positive impacts from expressing emotions through writing, one of which is feeling much better psychological well-being.

Declaration

The author would like to express his praise and gratitude to the presence of Almighty God, because of His blessings, mercy and grace, so that we can complete the journal with the title "Writing Therapy to reduce self-harm behavior". With the completion of this article, it is not an end, but a beginning to start a new journey in life. We realize that there are figures who have contributed to the completion of this journal, especially to the respondents who were willing to take the time to complete this research who has helped. In particular, the author would like to thank Mr. Iredho Fani Reza, S. Psi I., MA Si as the supervisor who was patient, took the time, gave up his energy and thoughts and also paid attention in providing assistance during the journal writing process. We also thank Doki Course-and Training for publishing our research journal. Thank you and warm greetings to all group friends who always contribute to the process of making this journal.

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