

The Effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Approach in Reducing Students' Cyberbullying Behavior

Nindya Ayu Pristanti¹, Miswanto², Sri Milfayetty³, Rina Suryani⁴, Yovian Yustiko Prasetya⁵

{nindyapristanti@unimed.ac.id¹, miswanto@unimed.ac.id², milfayetty@unimed.ac.id,
rinasuryani@unimed.ac.id⁴, yovianyp@upstegal.ac.id⁵}

Department of Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Negeri Medan, Indonesia¹²³⁴,
Department of Guidance and Counseling, Universitas Pancasakti Tegal, Indonesia⁵

Abstract. This study aims to describe the effectiveness of the rational emotive behavior therapy approach in reducing students' cyberbullying behavior. This research design uses a quantitative experimental approach. The sample in this study was 20 students with cyberbullying behavior. 10 people for the experimental group and 10 people for the control group. This research instrument uses a student cyberbullying behavior scale that has met the research instrument requirements, then the data is analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test and the Kolmogorov Smirnov 2 Independent Samples Test. The results of the study show that there is a significant difference in the bullying behavior of students in the experimental group before and after following the rational emotive behavior therapy approach in group format.

Keywords: Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Cyberbullying Behavior

1 Introduction

Bullying in schools requires attention because its knowledge and practice are constantly evolving, related to its nature, level, effects, and areas of complexity [1]. Verbal bullying is the most common form of traditional bullying, followed by relational bullying, and physical bullying. Bullying can be classified in various ways, including physical attacks and psychological and verbal abuse. Statistics show that traditional bullying and cyberbullying are common among adolescents [2]. Smith stated that, as a form of bullying, cyberbullying has unique characteristics due to the presence of social media. [3]

Cyberbullying is an increasingly prevalent phenomenon among adolescents, particularly in high school settings. Cyberbullying can have negative impacts on the mental and psychological health of victims, such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and can even lead to suicide [4]. Cyberbullying is a form of aggressive bullying that occurs when an individual or group of

individuals behaves irrationally and persistently toward victims who cannot easily restore their self-esteem. [5]

The accelerated pace and advancement of technology have resulted in an increasing number of features, such as social media, making people increasingly accustomed to using social media. Tristan Harris stated that major platforms such as Facebook, Google, YouTube, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram have allocated millions of dollars for psychological research to understand how to make consumers more mindful of their behavior and the time they spend on social media [6]. Social media allows any information to spread easily within society, thus influencing a nation's perspective, lifestyle, and culture. Through social media, people are invited to engage in dialogue, sharpening their reasoning and psychological skills with the world that only appears on screen. However, it cannot be denied that messages broadcast through electronic media can lead audiences toward both prosocial and antisocial behavior. Teenagers are the age group most active in using social media. [7]

Many teenagers use social media to find friends or build relationships, upload photos and videos of their activities, and develop a self-image. Unfortunately, not all teenagers understand how to use social media wisely and correctly. Social media is often used as a means for teenagers to share statuses or upload comments about others, both positive and negative. In using social media, there are no mandatory ethical requirements that internet users, especially high school students, must adhere to. In this regard, the role of guidance and counseling teachers is crucial in guiding and supervising students' use of social media, so they can understand and instill good ethics in interacting in the digital world. [8]

Cyberbullying behavior can have a tremendous negative impact on victims. Furthermore, Bottino (2015) stated that this behavior is highly likely to be imitated. Adolescents tend to engage in bullying after being bullied by someone more powerful, such as a parent, older sibling, upperclassman, or more dominant peer. [9]

Willard (2006) divides cyberbullying behavior into seven forms. First, flaming, or online arguments. Second, harassment. Third, cyberstalking. Fourth, denigration. Fifth, impersonating, or fake accounts. Sixth, Outing & Trickery. Outing: spreading someone else's secrets, while Trickery: deception. Seventh, exclusion, or ostracism, involves intentionally excluding someone from an online group. This case often occurs among the general public, particularly in peer groups or friendship groups. Cyberbullying behavior is one example of the misuse of existing information technology [10].

2 Research Method

In this study, the researcher applied a quantitative method, so-called because the data obtained are in numerical form and analyzed using statistical methods [11]. This study also applies an experimental research type, which according to Sugiyono is a research design involving two groups, namely the experimental group and the control group, and is carried out by administering a pre-test and post-test. The research design used is the Nonequivalent Control Group Design, which is a form of quasi-experimental research, where the experimental group and the control group are not selected randomly, but are still given a pre-test and post-test to see

the effect of the treatment given on the variables studied. Data was collected by cyberbullying questionnaire adopted Williard's questionnaire that have 28 items.

3 Result and Discussion

An initial overview of the level of cyberbullying among eleventh-grade students at SMA Negeri 18 Medan was obtained through the results of a pre-test given to the experimental and control groups before the implementation of group counseling services using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach. Cyberbullying instruments were given to 10 students in each group. Based on the measurement results, all students from both groups showed a relatively high level of cyberbullying. This indicates that cyberbullying problems are quite significant among students, especially in the context of following fashion and lifestyle trends that are developing among teenagers. The following is the distribution of students' cyberbullying scores based on the pre-test results:

Table 1. Distribution of Cyberbullying Pre-Test Score of Class XI Students

No	Group	Student	Score	Cyberbullying Category
1	Experiment	10	92-103	high
2	Control	10	94-100	high

Description of this table is that the cyberbullying instrument consists of 30 items with a maximum score of 120. The cyberbullying levels used are: Score 30–59 = Low; Score 60–89 = Moderate; core 90–120 = High.

From the table above, it can be concluded that all students who participated in the study experienced high levels of cyberbullying during the pre-test. This finding indicates that social pressures regarding fashion and lifestyle trends significantly impact students' psychological well-being. Therefore, group counseling services using the REBT approach are considered relevant to help students manage irrational thought patterns and reduce excessive anxiety arising from cyberbullying.

a. Pre-Test Data of Experiment Group

Before the experimental group received group counseling services using the REBT approach, a pre-test was administered to measure levels of cyberbullying. The pre-test results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pre-test Results of the Experimental Group's Cyberbullying Level

No.	Initial	Pre-Test
1	A.S	96
2	I.S	96
3	F.G	97
4	A.B	92
5	A.R	99
6	N.G	102
7	A.L	96
8	A.T	98
9	S.S	99
10	Y.S	103

The average pre-test score in the experimental group was 97.8 with a standard deviation of 3.19. This indicates that students' cyberbullying levels were high before treatment. The fairly varied distribution of scores also indicates differences in cyberbullying levels among students before participating in group counseling services with the REBT approach.

b. Pre-test Data of Control Group

The control group received no treatment. The pre-test data for the control group is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Pre-test Result of Control Group

No.	Initial	Pre-Test Score
1	R.Y	100
2	S.S	94
3	S.A	99
4	C.R	96
5	K.G	95
6	A.L	99
7	S.M	99
8	M.R	95
9	R.W	96
10	P.N	97

The average pre-test score in the control group was 97.0 with a standard deviation of 2.11. This indicates that the level of cyberbullying among students was high and fairly consistent before the treatment, even though this group did not receive any intervention during the study.

c. Post-test Data of Experiment Group

After receiving three sessions of group counseling using the REBT approach, students in the experimental group were given another post-test to measure changes in cyberbullying levels. The data are presented in Table 4

Table 4. Post-Test Result of Experiment Group

No.	Initial	Post-Test Score
1	A.S	47
2	I.S	46
3	F.G	53
4	A.B	55
5	A.R	54
6	N.G	59
7	A.L	58
8	A.T	70
9	S.S	62
10	Y.S	63

The average post-test score in the experimental group was 56.7 with a standard deviation of 7.33. This indicates that after receiving group counseling services using the REBT approach, students' cyberbullying levels decreased significantly. The greater spread of scores compared to the pre-test indicates a difference in students' response levels to the intervention.

d. Post-test Data of Control Group

The control group was not given any treatment. The post-test was conducted at the same time as the experimental group. The data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Post-test Results: Cyberbullying Levels of the Control Group

No.	Initial	Post-Test Score
1	R.Y	98
2	S.S	97
3	S.A	99
4	C.R	101
5	K.G	95
6	A.L	98
7	S.M	96
8	M.R	94
9	R.W	102
10	P.N	98

The average post-test score in the control group was 97.8 with a standard deviation of 2.49. This indicates that the level of cyberbullying in students in the control group remained high and relatively stable because no treatment or intervention was provided during the study.

e. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Results

A comparison of pre-test and post-test results was conducted to assess the effectiveness of group counseling services using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach in reducing cyberbullying among students. The results of the experimental group showed a significant decrease in scores after the intervention.

Before the intervention, the experimental group had an average pre-test score of 97.8 with a standard deviation of 3.19, indicating that the students' cyberbullying levels were in the high category. After participating in several sessions of group counseling services using the REBT approach, the average post-test score dropped to 56.7 with a standard deviation of 7.33. This indicates a significant reduction in cyberbullying in the experimental group.

Meanwhile, the control group, which did not receive treatment, had an average pre-test score of 97.0 with a standard deviation of 2.11. After the post-test, the average score increased slightly to 97.8 with a standard deviation of 2.53. This increase was not significant and indicates that without treatment, cyberbullying levels in the control group tended to remain high.

From these comparisons, it can be concluded that a significant decrease in scores occurred only in the experimental group. This is an initial indication that group counseling services using the REBT approach are effective in reducing cyberbullying rates among students, particularly those related to fashion and lifestyle trends among adolescents.

f. Research Findings

This study aimed to determine the effect of group counseling services using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach on cyberbullying levels in students. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test.

g. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in cyberbullying scores before and after treatment in the experimental group. Data analysis used the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test because the analyzed data were paired and did not meet the assumption of a normal distribution. This test is appropriate for use with pre-test and post-test data in the same group. The test results were $Z = -2.805$. Asymp.Sig (2-tailed) 0.005.

Based on the preliminary data obtained, it was found that most students experienced high levels of cyberbullying, indicating that flaming occurred most frequently, followed by harassment, cyberstalking, outing and trickery, denigration, impersonating, and exclusion. The study explained that flaming is often occurred among students in SMA Negeri 18 Medan which is main characteristic of Cyberbullying [12]. Based on a review of various previous studies, Hua,

Z (2016) found that self-concept and self-regulation significantly reduced cyberbullying in Instagram-using college students, contributing 77.1% and with a strong negative correlation [13]. Meanwhile, Kumala (2024) demonstrated that information services based on the REBT approach effectively reduced cyberbullying in high school students, as demonstrated by a significant t-test result between pre-test and post-test scores [14]. Furthermore, research by Li, Q (2015) on the effectiveness of group counseling services using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach in reducing cyberbullying in high school students demonstrated that the approach significantly reduced cyberbullying rate [15]. This study used a one-group pre-test post-test experimental design. Unlike the aforementioned study, this study employed a nonequivalent control group design involving two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The reason for choosing group counseling services with the REBT approach in this study is because this approach has proven effective in helping students identify and change irrational thought patterns that cause cyberbullying, thus hopefully reducing the cyberbullying behaviour felt by students.

This study used an experimental design with an experimental group receiving REBT-based group counseling services and a control group without treatment. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test showed a significant difference between the two groups with a 2-tailed value of 0.005, indicating that group counseling services with the REBT approach significantly reduced cyberbullying in students. This decrease in cyberbullying scores confirms the effectiveness of the intervention in helping students manage social pressure and rationalize irrational thoughts related to fashion and lifestyle trends.

These findings are supported by REBT theory. According to Ellis and Dryden (1997), emotional disorders such as anxiety and stress do not arise from external situations, but rather from individuals' unrealistic and rigid irrational beliefs [16]. In this context, cyberbullying can be understood as anxiety arising from the irrational belief that one must always follow trends to be socially accepted. Using REBT techniques, students are taught to identify and transform these beliefs into more rational thought patterns, thereby reducing their negative impact on psychological well-being. This aligns with previous research, such as that by Agusliana et al. (2024), who found REBT to be effective in reducing cyberbullying in junior high school students [17]. Research by Natalia (2016) also confirmed that REBT increases learning motivation by modifying negative beliefs, strengthening evidence of the approach's effectiveness on various aspects of students' psychology [18].

Thus, REBT-based group counseling services are not only effective in reducing cyberbullying related to fashion and lifestyle trends but also serve as an important strategy in guidance and counseling practices in schools. This approach can be implemented by counselors as a promotive and preventive effort to improve students' mental health, develop rational thought patterns, and reduce potentially harmful social pressure.

4 Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that group counseling services with the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach are effective in reducing the level of Cyberbullying experienced by students of SMA Negeri 18 Medan, especially in the aspects of

flaming. After participating in group counseling sessions with the REBT approach, there was a significant decrease in Cyberbullying scores of students in the experimental group compared to the control group who did not receive the intervention. This shows that REBT is able to help students manage digital social pressures and form a more rational mindset, so that they are no longer too dependent on external validation and are able to live a more balanced and emotionally healthy social life.

References

- [1] Maunder, R. E., & Crafter, S. (2018). School bullying from a sociocultural perspective. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, 38*, 13–20. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.10.010>
- [2] Yang, S. C., Lin, C.-Y., & Chen, A.-S. (2014). A study of Taiwanese teens' traditional and cyberbullying behaviors. *Journal of Educational Computing Research, 50*(4), 525–552. <https://doi.org/10.2190/EC.50.4.e>
- [3] Smith, P. K. (2013). School bullying. *Sociologia, Problemas e Práticas, 71*, 81–98. <https://journals.openedition.org/spp/988>
- [4] Pandie, Mira Marleni & Ivan Th. J. Weismann. (2016). Pengaruh Cyberbullying Di Media Sosial Terhadap Perilaku Reaktif Sebagai Pelaku Maupun Sebagai Korban cyberbullying Pada Siswa Kristen SMP Nasional Makassar. *Jurnal Jafray, 14*, 1, 43-62
- [5] Sari, RP, & Sari, DP (2020). Cyberbullying di Kalangan Remaja: Bentuk dan Dampaknya. *Jurnal Psikologi, 15*(2), 178-189.
- [6] Prastiwi, Y., & Prihastuti, D. (2021). Jenis Media Digital dan Perilaku Cyberbullying pada Remaja. *Jurnal Bimbingan dan Konseling, 10*(2), 89- 98.
- [7] Pratiwi, AD, & Herdiana, I. (2021). Hubungan antara Kecanduan Internet dan Empati dengan Perilaku Cyberbullying pada Remaja. *Jurnal Psikologi Perkembangan, 10*(1), 45-56.
- [8] Natalia, El C. "Remaja, Media Sosial dan *cyberbullying*." *Komunikatif*, vol. 5, tidak. 2, 2016, hlm. 119-139, doi: 10.33508/jk.v5i2.991.
- [9] Bottino, S. M. B. et al. (2015) Cyberbullying and adolescent mental health: systematic review, *Cadernos de Saúde Pública, 31*(3):463–475. DOI: 10.1590/0102-311x00036114.)
- [10] Willard, N. E. (2006, 26 Maret). Educators guide to cyberbullying: Addressing the harm caused by online social cruelty. clubtnt.org. Retrieved from <http://clubtnt.org/safeOnline/printResources/EducatorsGuideToCyberbullyingAddressingTheHarm.pdf>
- [11] Putri, N. K. R. A., Suarni, N. K., & Dharsana, I. K. (2022). Efektivitas Konseling REBT Pendekatan Teknik Self-Talk Untuk Menurunkan Tingkat Kecemasan Akademik Siswa Kelas X SMAN "A" Denpasar. *Jurnal EDUCATIO (Jurnal Pendidikan Indonesia), 8*(2), 215-223.
- [12] Setyowati, D., & Suwarjo, S. (2021). Konseling individu rational emotive behavior: studi eksperimen terhadap peningkatan konsep diri. *Jurnal Konseling dan Pendidikan, 9* (4), 315-320.
- [13] Hua, Z. (2016). How to design and apply interactive digital educational TV programs based on the ADDIE model. *International Journal of Information and Education Technology, 6*(11), 884.
- [14] Kumala, F. A., & Mardiyah, Z. (2024). The Effectiveness of "Kancani": An REBT-Based Web Application on Junior High Students' Subjective Well-Being. *Indigenous: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi, 9*(1), 69-86.
- [15] Li, Q., Smith, P. K., & Cross, D. (2012). Research into cyberbullying. *Cyberbullying in the global playground: Research from international perspectives*, 1-12.
- [16] Corey, G. (2013). *Theory and Practice of Counseling and Psychotherapy*, Ninth Edition Gerald Corey. Cengage Learning.
- [17] Agusliana, P. A., Suryati, S., & Dewi, E. P. (2024). Individual Counseling Using Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) Techniques to Improve Self-Confidence in Adolescents Who Are Victims of Bullying. *Scientific Journal of Education, 4*(2), 380–390. <https://doi.org/10.51214/bip.v4i2.965>

- [18] Natalia, E. (2016). Teenagers, Social Media, and Cyberbullying. *Scientific Journal of Communication*, 5(2).