



## Cognitive Therapy and Supportive Therapy Can Reduce Anxiety in Female Adolescents who are Victims of Bullying

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Bullying among female adolescents is a significant psychosocial issue that can lead to increased levels of anxiety, impaired self-esteem, and long-term emotional consequences. This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of cognitive therapy combined with supportive therapy in reducing anxiety among female adolescents who have experienced bullying. Cognitive therapy focuses on restructuring maladaptive thought patterns, while supportive therapy emphasizes empathy, encouragement, and strengthening of coping skills. The research design used true experimental pre- post test with control group with a sample of 60 respondents and using random sampling techniques. The questionnaires used in this study were the Olweus Bully/Victims Questionnaire to determine adolescents who are victims of bullying and HARS (Hamilton anxiety raising scale) to determine the level of anxiety. The findings suggest that the integration of cognitive and supportive therapy offers a synergistic approach to addressing psychological distress caused by bullying, ( $p = 0.048$ ). A combination of cognitive therapy and supportive therapy is recommended to overcome mental health problems in adolescent victims of bullying.*

*Keywords: cognitive therapy, supportive therapy, anxiety, female adolescents, bullying*

## **ABSTRAK**

*Perundungan di kalangan remaja perempuan merupakan masalah psikososial yang signifikan yang dapat menyebabkan peningkatan tingkat kecemasan, penurunan harga diri, dan konsekuensi emosional jangka panjang. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi efektivitas terapi kognitif yang dikombinasikan dengan terapi suportif dalam mengurangi kecemasan di kalangan remaja perempuan yang mengalami perundungan. Terapi kognitif berfokus pada restrukturisasi pola pikir maladaptif, sedangkan terapi suportif menekankan empati, dorongan, dan penguatan keterampilan mengatasi masalah. Desain penelitian menggunakan eksperimen murni pra-pasca uji dengan kelompok kontrol dengan sampel 60 responden dan menggunakan teknik pengambilan sampel acak. Kuesioner yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah Kuesioner Olweus Bully/Victims untuk menentukan remaja yang menjadi korban perundungan dan HARS (Hamilton Anxiety Raising Scale) untuk menentukan tingkat kecemasan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa integrasi terapi kognitif dan suportif menawarkan pendekatan sinergis untuk mengatasi tekanan psikologis yang disebabkan oleh perundungan, ( $p = 0,048$ ). Kombinasi terapi kognitif dan terapi suportif direkomendasikan untuk mengatasi masalah kesehatan mental pada remaja korban perundungan.*

*Kata kunci: terapi kognitif, terapi suportif, kecemasan, remaja perempuan, perundungan*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Anxiety in adolescents is partly obtained from aggressive behavior carried out by peers. (İme, 2025) said that Bullying is generally a type of aggressive behavior. Bullying behavior also causes danger, both mentally, physically, cognitively or emotionally, where it is done intentionally. Bullying victims are usually reluctant to report it to other parties including parents because they are worried about getting worse treatment. This is what makes Bullying even more rampant if not handled properly. Various negative impacts caused by bullying, (Schoeler et al., 2018) in their study found that bullying can have an anxiety effect, affect self-esteem, and causes depression in its victims. Another study conducted by (Arseneault, 2017) stated that anxiety due to bullying is the biggest factor in adolescents being reluctant to leave the house.

Bullying is a phenomenon that is spread throughout the world. One in three young people in 30 countries have been victims of bullying and have skipped school due to bullying (Unicef, 2019). The prevalence of bullying is estimated at 8 to 50% in several Asian, American and European countries (Soedjatmiko, 2015). The incidence of bullying in Indonesia reached 3,800 cases of bullying (KPAI, 2023). (Raines, 2023) states that there are three aspects of anxiety, namely, the form of social avoidance and feelings of stress experienced in general, the form of social avoidance and feelings of stress in new situations or when dealing with new people/strangers, and fear of negative evaluation from others. Anxiety also has several impacts, including adolescents with high levels of anxiety having fewer friends, having negative perceptions of themselves, impaired social functioning, and experiencing obstacles in developing abilities in the community environment.

Handling anxiety in victims of bullying must be done as soon as possible to minimize the impact. Therapy that can be used to overcome anxiety in victims of bullying is cognitive therapy. According to (Laela, 2023) cognitive therapy is a therapy that identifies negative and destructive thoughts that lead to persistent anxiety and depression. Cognitive therapy can help stop negative thoughts and help sufferers fight them. This therapy aims to change negative thoughts into positive ones, help control themselves.

Supportive therapy is a part of psychotherapy used in psychiatric-based communities (Townsend, 2015). Unlike other models, supportive therapy does not depend on specific concepts or theories. Supportive therapy generally uses psychodynamics to understand how a person can change. The goals of supportive therapy are described by Rockland (1993) in (Stuart & Keliat, 2016), namely increasing supportive individuals, increasing individual strengths, coping skills and using coping resources, reducing individual anxiety and adaptive coping responses, helping individuals to be independent according to their problems/conditions, increasing autonomy in decision making, solving problems that occur due to biopsychosocial factors, considering current maladaptive coping responses.

The results of the researcher's interviews with female adolescent victims of bullying, found that adolescents feel worried because they are often left for a certain purpose, excluded from the group and ignored. Bullying behavior also makes adolescents sad because they have rude nicknames, are made funny, are teased in a hurtful way, and are commented on about race rudely. This makes female adolescent victims of bullying experience signs of anxiety symptoms, such as: no appetite, restlessness, restless sleep, crying and difficulty concentrating. Adolescents do not yet have the ability to overcome the anxiety they experience.

There have been several previous studies on the anxiety of adolescent victims of bullying, but there has been no study that combines cognitive therapy + supportive therapy in overcoming the anxiety of female adolescent victims of bullying. Based on these things, researchers are interested in conducting a study on the effectiveness of cognitive therapy and supportive therapy on anxiety in female adolescent victims of bullying. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of Cognitive Therapy and supportive therapy on anxiety in female adolescent victims of bullying. The research questions that arise are: What is the level of anxiety in female adolescent victims of bullying? and Is cognitive therapy + supportive therapy effective in overcoming anxiety problems in female adolescent victims of bullying?

## RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, the researchers used a quasi-experimental research type with a pre and post test design with a control group, namely observations were carried out before treatment and after treatment using a control group. This type of approach is used to see changes in the anxiety level of adolescent victims of bullying before and after cognitive therapy and supportive therapy. Sampling was carried out on female adolescent victims of bullying in the East Jakarta area, as many as 60 respondents.

Measurement of anxiety levels using the Hamilton Anxiety Rating Scale (HARS) questionnaire instrument consisting of 14 statements using a Likert scale, score 0 - 17: mild anxiety, 18 - 24: mild - moderate anxiety, 25 - 30: moderate - severe anxiety, > 30: severe anxiety - panic. The Cronbach alpha coefficient value = 0.77 - 0.92, which means that this questionnaire is suitable to be used as a measuring tool to measure anxiety. Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ) is used to assess adolescent involvement as perpetrators or victims of bullying. The number of items is 40 questions, including: frequency of being a victim of bullying, committing bullying, type of bullying, location of incident, attitude towards bullying, support from friends, teachers and parents, and reaction to bullying. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value is >0.80 which means that the reliability and validity are very good

## RESULTS OF STUDY

Characteristics of adolescent victims of bullying average age 20 years with the youngest age 19 years and the oldest age 27 years, the highest level of parental education is high school (71.7%), the majority of family income <5 million (78.3%), support system: >3 (53%) and the most common parenting pattern is democracy (73.3%). Anxiety of female adolescent victims of bullying before cognitive therapy and supportive therapy in the intervention group and nursing actions by nurses in the control group can be seen in table 1.

Based on table 1, it is known that the average level of anxiety of female adolescent victims of bullying is 25.3 indicating moderate anxiety. Differences in anxiety of female adolescent victims of bullying before cognitive therapy and supportive therapy in the intervention group with nursing actions by nurses in the control group can be seen in table 2. Based on table 2, it shows that in the intervention group there was a significant decrease in average anxiety from 26.9 to 12.85 (14.05) from moderate anxiety to normal. In the control group, there was a decrease in average anxiety from 25.7 to 15.38 (10.32) which means from moderate anxiety to mild anxiety.

It is known that the average age of female adolescents is 20 years. (Kroger, 2017) states that this age range is included in the early adulthood group, in this early adulthood the hope of being able to live independently and the many demands of the burden of expectations for oneself can be factors that result in mental disorders. (Videback, 2020) explains that age can affect a person's psychology, the higher the age, the better the level of emotional maturity, and the ability to deal with various problems. The age of 20 greatly affects the anxiety of adolescent victims of bullying because it is a crucial transition period that demands emotional, social, and self-identity maturity. Emotional wounds from bullying in the past can worsen the stress that arises at this age and increase anxiety significantly.

**Table 1. Anxiety of female adolescent victims of bullying before cognitive therapy and supportive therapy were carried out in the intervention group and nursing actions in the control group (n=60)**

Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max	CI 95%	P.value
Anxiety	Control	30	25,7	5,111	21	26	25,58-29,33	0,473
	Intervention	30	26,9	5,421	21	27	27,59 - 31,57	
	<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>25,3</b>	<b>5,334</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26,87-30,16</b>	

**Table 2. Differences in anxiety of female adolescent victims of bullying between before and after cognitive therapy and supportive therapy were carried out in the intervention group with nursing actions by nurses in the control group (n=60)**

Variable	Group	N	Mean before	Mean After	Mean iffERENCE	SD	P. Value
Anxiety	Intervention	30	26,9	12,85	-14,05	4,089	0,048
	Control	30	25,7	15,38	-10,32	6,228	

The respondents in this study were female adolescents. Gender affects self-concept, according to (Song et al., 2024) women are more sensitive, easily feel guilty which can reduce appetite and women tend to use feelings in dealing with a problem, while men are required to be stronger, because they use their minds more than their feelings. In addition, biologically equipped with good neuroendocrine in responding to anxiety, while women encourage more mechanisms of oxytocin which is a calming hormone, which appears simultaneously with the hormone estrogen.

(Zhang et al., 2024) stated that the incidence of emotional mental disorders in women is higher than in men, (Useche et al., 2023) also stated that the incidence of anxiety disorders in women is higher than in men, this is because women have a more labile personality, also the role of hormones that affect emotional conditions so that they are more overflowing, easily anxious, and suspicious.

The results of this study indicate that the average parental education is high school. Educated parents tend to be better able to provide a stimulating environment for their children, such as providing books, encouraging discussions, and facilitating learning activities outside of school. This stimulation not only improves children's cognitive development but also supports their social skills through interactive and relevant learning in everyday life (Santrock, 2019).

Parents with high school education can influence the level of anxiety of children who are victims of bullying, this is due to a lack of understanding of mental health, minimal access and knowledge of professional help, less reflective communication and parenting patterns, economic pressures that interfere with emotional support, inappropriate responses to bullying problems. This does not mean that all high school graduate parents are negative, but statistically, education levels affect knowledge, attitudes, and skills in dealing with children's emotional situations.

The highest family income is less than 5 million. Financial resources increase a person's coping options in every condition that causes anxiety. People with strong economic status will be much more difficult to experience stress than those with weak economic status (Sadock, 2020). Family income <5 million can affect the anxiety of adolescent victims of bullying, this is due to minimal access to psychological services, a home environment full of emotional stress, social inequality that creates feelings of inferiority, lack of emotional support and coping education, and unmet basic needs. All of these factors reinforce each other and make adolescents more vulnerable to anxiety disorders, especially when facing traumatic situations such as bullying.

The results of this study show that the most common parenting pattern is democracy. Parenting patterns greatly influence the psychosocial development of school-age children, because parenting patterns include how parents guide, discipline, and support children in facing developmental challenges. Parenting patterns determine how children build relationships with others, manage emotions, and develop self-concept (Chu & Chen, 2025).

Democratic parenting influences children's psychosocial development, because this pattern balances the demands and support provided by parents, thus providing a conducive environment for children to develop optimally. Democratic parenting combines clear control with emotional support and active involvement, allowing children to feel valued and encouraged to be independent (Chen et al., 2022).

Parenting patterns have a significant impact on anxiety levels and bullying victimization experiences in female adolescents. Positive parenting and supporting children's autonomy can increase resilience and reduce the risk of anxiety and bullying victimization. Democratic parenting is indeed a protective factor, but it is not a guarantee that children will not experience psychological disorders. If a teenager who is a victim of bullying experiences anxiety even though he comes from a democratic family, this can be caused by a clash between family values and social reality, emotional sensitivity, unpreparedness to face social violence and high expectations of the environment.

The results of the study showed that the support system owned by female adolescent victims of bullying was >3. Adolescents with a support system of more than 3 people tend to experience lower levels of anxiety, this is because they feel safe and supported, can channel their emotions healthily, get solutions from many directions, do not feel alone and are able to rise and adapt. The results of the study (Julianti et al., 2023) stated that family support and social support greatly influence adolescent victims of bullying to increase positive self-concept and reduce anxiety. The results of the study (Ringdal et al., 2021) confirmed that social support from family and friends can reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression caused by bullying.

Adolescents who have a support system of more than 3 people can still experience anxiety, this is because the support given may not be of good quality or not connected, psychological wounds from bullying can be deep and long-lasting, adolescents are not fully open to the support system, the bullying environment has not changed or has not been handled, there are internal factors such as temperament or pre-existing anxiety disorders.

## DISCUSSION

### **Anxiety of female adolescent victims of bullying before cognitive therapy and supportive therapy**

The results of the study showed that before cognitive therapy and supportive therapy were carried out, the majority of adolescent victims of bullying experienced moderate anxiety. Anxiety is an unclear fear accompanied by feelings of uncertainty, helplessness, isolation, and insecurity (Laela et al., 2023). Anxiety is an atypical feeling caused by the suspicion of danger or frustration that will endanger the sense of security, balance or life of a person or their social group (Arseneault, 2018). In adolescent victims of bullying experience fear, anxiety, feeling helpless, crying and difficulty sleeping.

The results of the study (Lee et al., 2025) explain that bullying has a significant relationship with mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety in adolescents. (Kaess, 2020) stated that adolescents who experience bullying increase the risk of developing Bipolar Personality Disorder. This trauma can affect the ability to regulate emotions, interpersonal skills and self-concept.

### **The effect of cognitive therapy and supportive therapy on anxiety in adolescent victims of bullying**

Anxiety in adolescents who received cognitive therapy and supportive therapy decreased by 14.05 and in adolescents who did not receive cognitive therapy and supportive therapy, the anxiety value decreased by 10.32. After cognitive therapy and supportive therapy, the results of the study showed a significant average decrease in anxiety levels. The decrease in anxiety levels from moderate anxiety to normal in adolescents who received cognitive therapy and supportive therapy. Meanwhile, the decrease in anxiety levels from moderate anxiety to mild in adolescents who received Nursing Actions.

This is in line with the results of studies (Laela & Wahyuni, 2019; Syafitrah et al., 2019) which state that cognitive therapy is effective in reducing patient anxiety levels by changing negative thoughts into adaptive thoughts. This research is also in line with the statement (Aeni & Jati, 2018; Dhestiana et al., 2016) which confirms that there is a significant decrease in the level of anxiety in patients with increased ability to better cope with better coping mechanisms. Based on these data, it can be concluded that cognitive therapy and supportive therapy can reduce the level of anxiety in adolescent victims of bullying.

### **The effect of nursing actions of nurses/generalist therapy on anxiety in adolescent victims of bullying**

There was a significant average decrease in anxiety of 10.32, which means from moderate anxiety to mild anxiety. This is in line with the results of studies (Faizah, 2024; Livana, 2016; Nasution, et al., 2021) which stated that nursing actions of nurses/generalist therapy can reduce anxiety levels in patients with physical disorders. (Daha et al., 2022) stated that generalist therapy can help individuals reduce stress and increase relaxation.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the combination of cognitive therapy and supportive therapy is effective in significantly reducing anxiety levels among female adolescents who have experienced bullying. Cognitive therapy helps restructure maladaptive thoughts that contribute to anxiety, while supportive therapy reinforces coping skills through empathy and encouragement. Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive framework for addressing the emotional impact of bullying and promoting psychological resilience in adolescents. It is recommended that mental health practitioners, school counselors, and educators integrate both cognitive and supportive therapeutic approaches into intervention programs for bullying victims. Early identification and tailored interventions should be prioritized to prevent the long-term psychological consequences of bullying. Further research involving larger and more diverse populations is encouraged to validate these findings and explore their applicability across different cultural contexts.

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