

Universitas Negeri Padang & Ikatan Konselor Indonesia

Editorial Office: Jurusan Bimbingan dan Konseling | Faculty of Education | Universitas Negeri Padang

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Volume 15 Number 2 2026



KONSELOR

ISSN 1412-9760 (Print) | ISSN 2541-5948 (Online)

Editor: Nilma Zola

Publication details, including author guidelines

URL: <https://counselor.pjj.unp.ac.id/index.php/konselor/about/submissions>

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Article History

Received: Saturday, February 14, 2026

Revised: Thursday, May 21, 2026

Published: Tuesday, June 30, 2026

How to cite this article (APA)

Silondae, D. P., Rahmat, A., Jahada, J., Aspin, A., & Putri, N. (2026). A pre-experimental study on cognitive behavioral therapy in enhancing self-confidence among juvenile inmates in an Indonesian juvenile correctional facility. *KONSELOR*, 15(2), 162–171. <https://doi.org/10.24036/02026152181-0-86>

The readers can link to article via <https://doi.org/10.24036/02026152181-0-86>

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A Pre-Experimental Study on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Enhancing Self-Confidence among Juvenile Inmates in an Indonesian Juvenile Correctional Facility

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Abstract: Children and adolescents undergoing rehabilitation at Juvenile Correctional Institutions are vulnerable to psychological problems, including low self-confidence, which may hinder rehabilitation and social reintegration. This study aimed to provide preliminary evidence on the implementation of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to improve the mental health of juvenile inmates, particularly self-confidence, at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari. This study employed a quantitative approach using a one-group pretest–posttest pre-experimental design. The participants consisted of eight juvenile inmates aged 15–17 years, selected through purposive sampling. The instrument used was a self-confidence scale developed based on Lauster's five aspects of self-confidence, namely belief in one's abilities, optimism, objectivity, responsibility, and rationality, which met the validity and reliability criteria. The cognitive behavioural therapy intervention was delivered over six group counselling sessions. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The findings indicated an increase in the self-confidence scores of juvenile inmates after receiving the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention, with a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores. The effect size calculation yielded an r value of 0.595, which falls into the large effect category. This finding indicates that the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention had a strong influence on the observed changes in scores. Overall, the findings provide preliminary insight into the potential use of cognitive behavioural therapy as a psychological service to help improve the self-confidence of juvenile inmates in Juvenile Correctional Institutions.

Key Words: Cognitive Behavioural Therapy; Juvenile inmates; Self-confidence; Juvenile Correctional Institution; Group counseling

INTRODUCTION

The growing number of children and adolescents involved in legal cases has become a crucial issue both globally and in Indonesia. Data indicate that approximately 261,200 children and adolescents were detained in prisons during the 2020–2021 period (UNICEF, 2021), while in Indonesia, the number of juveniles serving criminal sentences increased from 2,056 in 2015 to 2,294 in 2019 (Rahman, 2019). Their presence in correctional institutions should not be viewed solely in terms of criminal offending, as their involvement is often influenced by environmental factors (Putra, 2024), family socioeconomic conditions (Sharma, 2025), educational access (Sun, 2024), and peer influence (Yuet & Sehu, 2023). Therefore, the placement of children and adolescents in correctional institutions should not be

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interpreted solely as punishment for their previous actions, but also as a process of rehabilitation and development aimed at helping them become more adaptable individuals upon returning to society.

Legal proceedings, which generally take a relatively long time and involve investigation, arrest, prosecution, and trial, may result in deteriorating mental health for those who experience them (Clemente & Padilla-Racero, 2020). These conditions may become even more severe due to the harsh realities of prison life, such as confinement within high prison walls, restricted freedom of movement, social pressure from fellow inmates, limited social contact with external parties, and awareness of the negative stigma attached to former prisoners after release. Such experiences may shape maladaptive cognitive and emotional processes among juvenile inmates, including the emergence of negative self-beliefs, anxiety, shame, feelings of worthlessness, and expectations of future social rejection. Ultimately, these conditions may reduce the ability to evaluate oneself positively in social interactions.

Self-stigma is a condition commonly experienced by inmates. Sheehan et al. (2022) defined self-stigma as the process by which a person with mental illness applies negative stereotypes about mental illness to themselves. Self-stigma is also referred to as “internalised stigma.” Juvenile inmates who internalise self-stigma may perceive themselves as deficient and fundamentally different from others, thereby diminishing their sense of self-worth. If prolonged, this condition may contribute to significant declines in self-esteem and self-confidence.

Self-confidence is an individual’s belief in their ability to respond appropriately to various situations and circumstances. It is one of the psychological factors among juvenile inmates that may influence their behaviour both during their time in correctional institutions and after completing their rehabilitation period. Several studies have shown that inmates’ self-confidence is associated with the success of correctional rehabilitation programmes. Individuals with stronger beliefs in their ability to control their behaviour tend to demonstrate greater independence and are more likely to obtain employment (Hong et al., 2014) and to maintain behavioural changes after release (Hasisi et al., 2016). Conversely, individuals with low self-confidence find it more difficult to sustain behavioural change and are more vulnerable to returning to previous criminal behaviour (Villman, 2021). Thus, inmates with higher self-confidence are more likely to engage successfully in rehabilitation and social reintegration processes, which are among the primary objectives of the Indonesian correctional system (Undang-Undang Nomor 22 Tahun 2022 Tentang Pemasyarakatan).

Self-confidence is not an innate trait but rather the result of accumulated experiences and learning throughout an individual’s life. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that self-confidence is influenced by psychological experiences and cognitive learning processes. One possible intervention is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, a form of psychological therapy that helps individuals identify and modify destructive or disruptive thought patterns that negatively affect their emotions and behaviour (Nakao et al., 2021).

Cognitive behavioural therapy is a potentially effective approach to improving self-confidence, as it targets the interrelationships among thoughts, emotions, and behaviours that underlie its development. Cognitive restructuring techniques and behavioural experiments may help individuals become aware of their negative thoughts, evaluate their validity, replace maladaptive thinking with more realistic perspectives, and develop more adaptive behaviours. In the context of self-confidence, rational thinking may influence emotional and behavioural responses, thereby strengthening individuals’ beliefs in their own abilities, fostering optimism in facing challenges and the future, promoting objectivity towards experiences, and encouraging responsible behaviour, as reflected in Lauster’s dimensions of self-confidence (Amri et al., 2018).

A number of studies have examined the implementation of cognitive behavioural therapy among inmates, although the findings remain inconsistent. Cognitive behavioural therapy has been considered a potentially valuable intervention in correctional settings due to its positive outcomes, despite inconsistent findings reported in studies. Lark (2011) found that cognitive behavioural therapy significantly reduced inmates’ tendency to reoffend or engage in repeated criminal behaviour (recidivism). Similarly, Amoke et al. (2020) reported that cognitive behavioural therapy was effective in reducing psychological distress among inmates awaiting trial. However, cognitive behavioural therapy does not always produce significant improvements in inmates’ psychological conditions.

Mitchell et al. (2011), for example, found no significant differences in the mental health of inmates who received the intervention compared to those who did not.

The inconsistency in outcomes following cognitive behavioural therapy interventions among inmates warrants careful attention. The effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy in influencing individuals' thoughts, emotions, and behaviour is not universal. Therefore, interventions involving cognitive behavioural therapy for inmates should be carefully designed, taking into account inmate characteristics, psychological needs, the intervention focus, and the specific behavioural aspects targeted for change, to optimise outcomes. Within the Indonesian context, several studies have investigated the implementation of cognitive behavioural therapy among inmates in correctional institutions. Most of these studies have been conducted in general correctional institutions, with relatively fewer studies focusing on juvenile correctional settings. Such studies include research conducted at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Kelas II A Purwokerto (Budiyono et al., 2020), Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Narkotika Kelas II A Pamekasan (Patandean, 2018), and Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Wanita Kelas II A Semarang (Fitri & Widyastuti, 2021). Within juvenile correctional settings, similar interventions have been implemented to improve social interaction among children with emotional and behavioural disorders (Febrianti, 2025) and to enhance self-esteem among juvenile inmates (Kusnadi, 2024), both conducted at Lembaga Pemasyarakatan Khusus Anak Kelas II Bandung, as well as personality development programmes for juvenile sexual offenders at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Pekanbaru (Putri, 2025).

The studies reviewed mainly concentrated on adult inmates with specific traits, such as those nearing release, females, individuals involved in drug-related offenses, inmates with emotional and behavioral issues, and sexual offenders. As a result, the findings on cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) are somewhat isolated and not broadly applicable. Additionally, most research emphasises negative psychological factors like anxiety, withdrawal, and maladaptive behaviours, while the application of CBT to improve positive aspects, especially self-confidence in juvenile inmates, is still limited.

Building on the previous discussion, several limitations remain in current research on the implementation of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in correctional environments. These include inconsistent results, limited applicability beyond specific contexts, and a lack of emphasis on positive psychological growth, especially self-confidence, among juvenile inmates at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak in Indonesia. This study employed a pre-experimental design to gather preliminary data on the effectiveness of CBT in enhancing mental health, particularly self-confidence, among juvenile inmates. Consequently, the results aim to provide further evidence supporting the potential of CBT as a psychological intervention within Indonesian juvenile correctional facilities.

METHOD

This study used a pre-experimental design, which involves giving treatment to participants without a control group, or where other variables that might affect the dependent variable are not fully controlled, even if a control group exists (Latipun, 2021). Specifically, a one-group pretest–posttest design was employed, where a single group of participants was evaluated for self-confidence before and after the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention. The differences between the pre- and post-treatment measurements were then interpreted as effects of the intervention. The research design is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Design

Pretest	Intervention	Posttest
O ₁	X	O ₂

This study consisted of four main stages: the preliminary data collection stage, the pretest stage, the intervention stage, and the posttest stage. The details of each stage are as follows:

1. The preliminary data collection stage. At this stage, the research team focused on identifying and formulating the problems that would become the research variables. Within the framework of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, this stage is also known as the

assessment and formulation stage. During this phase, the researchers conducted a series of interviews with inmates and correctional officers and distributed screening questionnaires to map and understand the conditions of juvenile inmates.

2. The pretest stage. At this stage, the research team selected the juvenile inmates who would participate in the study and receive the intervention. Participants were administered a pretest prior to the intervention to obtain baseline data for subsequent comparison.
3. The intervention stage. At this stage, the research team implemented a Cognitive Behavioural Therapy intervention based on Beck's therapeutic structure, which consists of: (a) assessment and formulation, (b) socialisation to the cognitive model, (c) identification of automatic thoughts, (d) cognitive restructuring, (e) behavioural experiments, and (f) relapse prevention (Niwlikar, 2025). In practice, the research team made procedural adaptations to accommodate the characteristics of the participants and the research setting. Each stage was not delivered in a single meeting, but rather separately across one or two sessions to ensure focused implementation and provide participants with opportunities to understand and reflect on their experiences.

The intervention was consistently delivered by a single member of the research team, who served as the intervention facilitator. This was intended to ensure that all participants received information and treatment from the same source. Operationally, the intervention was conducted across six sessions, with one-week intervals between sessions.

1. The first session was conducted to introduce and explain the basic concepts of cognitive behavioural therapy, particularly the interrelationship between thoughts, emotions, and behaviours and their impact on daily life (socialisation to the cognitive model). During this session, the assessment and formulation stage was not repeated because it had already been conducted during the preliminary data collection stage.
2. The second session aimed to identify the negative and irrational thoughts and emotions of the juvenile inmates that influenced their feelings and behaviours, particularly those contributing to low self-confidence (identification of automatic thoughts).
3. The third session focused on collaboratively developing a cognitive behavioural therapy intervention plan with the juvenile inmates. During this stage, the facilitator encouraged participants to formulate strategies to help them overcome negative thoughts. The facilitator also emphasised the importance of having coping strategies for situations that could reduce self-confidence.
4. The fourth session was conducted to help participants evaluate, challenge, and transform their negative and irrational thoughts and beliefs into more adaptive and realistic ways of thinking (cognitive restructuring).
5. The fifth session provided opportunities for participants to practise and experiment with new behaviours that contradicted their negative and irrational beliefs. This was intended to provide positive experiences that could support cognitive change processes (behavioural experiments).
6. The sixth session aimed to reinforce the positive changes achieved throughout the therapy process and to encourage participants to maintain and apply them in their daily lives (relapse prevention).

The posttest stage was conducted after all intervention sessions had been completed. This stage aimed to assess the impact of the intervention and compare the results with the pretest scores.

Participants

This study involved 113 individuals undergoing rehabilitation at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari. Participants were chosen through purposive sampling, a method targeting specific criteria aligned with the study's aims, since not everyone in the population met these criteria

(Sugiyono, 2019). The researchers selected juvenile inmates who fit particular standards suitable for receiving cognitive behavioral therapy. A total of eight juvenile inmates participated, with selection based on factors such as preliminary results, the facilitator's ability to manage the participants effectively, available time at the research site, and adherence to the set criteria. The criteria for participant selection were established accordingly.

1. Juvenile inmates aged between 15 and 17 years.
2. Four juvenile inmates who obtained low scores on the screening questionnaire were the primary recipients of the intervention.
3. Four juvenile inmates who scored highly on the screening questionnaire. The inclusion of participants with high screening scores was based on practical considerations, namely, to foster group dynamics and a supportive environment during the intervention. This was considered important because the primary intervention recipients were individuals with low self-confidence, and the researchers sought to avoid creating a rigid, passive, and interaction-poor therapeutic environment.
4. Juvenile inmates with at least two months remaining in their rehabilitation period were included to minimise participant attrition due to release from the institution during the intervention process.
5. Juvenile inmates who were willing to participate in the intervention and had received approval from Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari.

Instrumentations

Data collection in this study employed a self-confidence scale developed by the research team based on Lauster's definition and indicators of self-confidence (Amri et al., 2018), namely:

1. Belief in one's abilities, defined as an individual's positive belief in themselves, reflects understanding and seriousness in carrying out tasks or activities.
2. Optimism is defined as a positive outlook in which individuals maintain constructive thoughts regarding themselves, their expectations, and their abilities.
3. Objectivity is defined as the ability to remain confident when evaluating or responding to situations.
4. Responsibility is defined as an individual's readiness to accept and face the consequences of their actions or decisions.
5. Rationality is defined as the ability to analyse problems, situations, or events logically and realistically.

The research instrument was developed based on the operational definitions of variables from the theoretical framework, specifically the definition and indicators of self-confidence. Content validity was ensured by verifying that all indicators were included in the instrument. The research team first created a blueprint for the instrument and then developed the questionnaire items. An expert judgment process involving guidance, counselling, and psychometric specialists was conducted, resulting in an instrument that accurately reflected the indicators. The instrument also underwent validity and reliability tests to confirm its accuracy and consistency in measuring self-confidence among juvenile inmates. The validity test involved 40 respondents, and analysis in SPSS version 25 showed 29 items were valid while 19 were invalid. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha in SPSS, yielding a value of 0.865, which is above the minimum requirement of 0.70 for internal consistency. Consequently, the instrument was deemed reliable.

Data Analysis

This study used both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Descriptive statistics summarised the characteristics of juvenile inmates' self-confidence levels in the pretest and posttest data, providing an initial overview of participants' self-confidence before and after the cognitive behavioural therapy. This step aimed to highlight overall changes within the sample and illustrate the inmates' self-confidence profiles. After presenting these descriptive insights, inferential statistics were

employed to test the research hypothesis by examining whether there was a significant difference in self-confidence scores pre- and post-intervention. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used for this purpose. The next step involved measuring the effect size to determine the extent to which the intervention contributed to the differences between pretest and posttest scores. Effect size was calculated using the following formula:

$$r = \frac{Z}{\sqrt{N}}$$

Description:

r = effect size

Z = Z value of the Wilcoxon test

$\sqrt{N}$ = number of participants

The effect size interpretation follows Cohen (2013), categorizing values into three levels: $0,10 \leq r < 0,30$ (small effect); $0,30 \leq r < 0,50$ (medium effect); and $r \geq 0,50$ (large effect).

RESULTS

The study's results showed differences in the pre- and post-intervention self-confidence scores of juvenile inmates. Overall, the average pretest score was 79.25, while the average posttest score increased to 88.57. A detailed comparison of these scores is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Scores of Juvenile Inmates

No	Participant	Pretest Total	Posttest Total	Increase Total
1.	MAF	81	96	15
2.	RN	93	99	6
3.	LMSW	89	88	-1
4.	DA	97	106	9
5.	AP	72	76	4
6.	R	74	76	2
7.	P	67	79	12
8.	AFS	61	69	8
Mean		79,25	88,57	6,9
Maximum		97	106	
Minimum		61	69	
Median		77,50	83,50	
Std. Deviation		12,90	13,15	

The data in the table above indicate variability in score changes among participants. Seven participants experienced score increases, whereas one participant experienced a one-point decrease. The observed pattern suggests that participants' pretest scores substantially influenced the magnitude of change observed during the posttest. Furthermore, an inferential statistical analysis was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores among juvenile inmates at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari following the implementation of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 4. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Result

		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest - Pretest	Negative Ranks	1 ^a	1.00	1.00
	Positive Ranks	7 ^b	5.00	35.00

Ties	0 ^c		
Total	8		

a. Posttest < Pretest

b. Posttest > Pretest

c. Posttest = Pretest

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test results showed a p-value of 0.017. Since the p-value was lower than α ($0.017 < 0.05$), it can be concluded that the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention produced a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of juvenile inmates at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari. Furthermore, the effect size calculation yielded an r value of 0.595, which falls within the large effect category. This finding indicates that the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention had a strong influence on the observed changes in scores.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the findings indicate that the cognitive-behavioural therapy intervention had a significant effect on changes in participants' pretest and posttest self-confidence scores. It should be acknowledged that these score changes cannot be fully attributed to the intervention itself, given the absence of a control group in the research design. Nevertheless, the findings provide additional evidence that cognitive-behavioural psychological interventions are relevant and potentially beneficial as a form of rehabilitation for juvenile inmates.

Through the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention, participants received guidance to become aware of, identify, and replace negative and irrational beliefs about their abilities with more positive and realistic thoughts. Thus, the findings are consistent with the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy, particularly the concept of cognitive restructuring. The data analysis revealed increases in self-confidence scores among the majority of participants, with seven participants demonstrating improvements ranging from 2 to 15 points. However, one participant experienced a one-point decrease in their score. This variability may reflect inconsistencies in the research findings. The intervention, which was relatively similar for all participants, did not produce identical effects across individuals. Such variability and post-intervention deterioration are not uncommon in pre-experimental research designs, as participants' final conditions are not solely determined by the intervention itself but may also be influenced by other factors, including demographic characteristics, participants' understanding of the intervention, subjective experiences during therapy, baseline psychological conditions, social and environmental backgrounds, and the quality of the therapeutic alliance developed throughout the intervention sessions (Crawford et al., n.d.; Cuijpers et al., 2018; Verkooyen et al., 2024).

The findings also contribute to the development of guidance and counselling scholarship in Indonesia, particularly in the context of mental health services for adolescents within juvenile correctional settings. These findings provide preliminary evidence that builds on existing research, indicating the potential for cognitive behavioural therapy to be adapted as a psychological service for juvenile inmates in Indonesia, particularly in supporting psychological recovery, identity development, and social reintegration readiness after release. The findings demonstrate that the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention yielded a large effect size on changes in participants' self-confidence scores before and after the intervention. At a general level, these findings appear consistent with several previous studies reporting the effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy in improving the mental health of children and adolescents across various settings, such as the study by De Silva et al. (2024), which found that cognitive behavioural therapy helped adolescents reduce anxiety and improve self-esteem in school settings; the study by Clarke et al. (2016), which reduced depressive symptoms among adolescents in healthcare settings; and the study by Daş et al. (2024), which addressed mental health problems such as depression and anxiety among children and adolescents in social protection institutions.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study cannot be equated with those of previous studies due to several methodological limitations. The use of a pre-experimental design with a very small number of participants and without a control group inherently limits control over external variables that may influence participants' psychological conditions during the intervention process and restricts the generalisability of the findings. Furthermore, the non-uniformity of score changes, including

deterioration observed in one participant, suggests that individual responses to the intervention may vary. Therefore, these findings are more appropriately interpreted as preliminary evidence regarding the potential effectiveness of cognitive behavioural therapy in improving self-confidence within the setting of Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak, and further investigation with stronger methodological rigour is required. Theoretically, these findings are consistent with the cognitive-behavioural paradigm, which views cognitive change as a central mechanism in improving positive psychological aspects, including self-confidence. This study provides only initial support for the possibility that cognitive behavioural therapy may be adapted for the rehabilitation of juvenile inmates in correctional institutions. Further research with stronger methodological rigour is therefore necessary.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Although the findings demonstrated significant changes in the self-confidence scores of juvenile inmates at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari following the cognitive behavioural therapy intervention, several limitations should be acknowledged.

The one-group pretest–posttest pre-experimental design used in this study allows for the possibility that changes in participants' self-confidence were influenced not only by the intervention itself, but also by other factors, including participant characteristics, understanding of the intervention, baseline psychological conditions, subjective experiences during the intervention, social and environmental backgrounds, the quality of the relationship between the facilitator and participants during the intervention process, and testing effects. The number of participants involved in the study was very small ($n = 8$), limiting the generalisability of the findings. In addition, the practical decision to include four participants with relatively high pretest scores may have contributed to noise and ceiling effects within the findings. One participant experienced deterioration, although the decrease was limited to one point and did not alter the participant's score category. This finding serves as an important point of evaluation, particularly regarding participant monitoring and intervention preparation. Changes in self-confidence were measured solely through differences between pretest and posttest scores assessed by the researchers following the intervention. Although the research instrument underwent validity and reliability testing, empirical behavioural changes displayed by participants after the intervention were beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, future studies should incorporate several improvements to strengthen the findings of this research, including: (1) the inclusion of a control group as a relevant comparison to more rigorously examine the causal relationship between cognitive behavioural therapy interventions and changes in participants' self-confidence; and (2) the implementation of longitudinal follow-up procedures beyond the completion of the intervention and posttest assessment, using additional objective measurement methods such as behavioural observation over longer periods following the intervention to determine whether changes in pretest and posttest scores correspond to observable changes in participants' daily behaviour.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings show that cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) produced a notable effect size in improving self-confidence among juvenile inmates at Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari, especially those with initially low scores. This suggests CBT helps identify and reshape negative self-beliefs and thought patterns, promoting self-confidence. However, since other factors could influence these results, the findings are preliminary. Due to the small sample size and lack of a control group, cautious interpretation is necessary, and more rigorous research is needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The research team sincerely thanks the head of the institution and all staff members of Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak Kelas II Kendari for their permission and support during this study. Special

thanks also go to the juvenile inmates who took part in all phases of the research, enabling the successful completion of this work.

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