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Abstract: Academic anxiety is characterised by the presence of internal thoughts and sentiments of fear and doubt regarding an individual's capacity to successfully complete assignments and examinations with expected results. The Cognitive Behaviour Group Counselling (CBGC) approach is an efficient method that can assist students in addressing these difficulties more effectively. When conducting this study, a quantitative technique was utilised, and a genuine experimental design was utilised. Thirty students from vocational high schools in Mojokerto, Indonesia participated in the study. The sample size was twenty-two students, and they were split evenly between two groups: an experimental group and a control group, each consisting of eleven students. A scale for measuring academic anxiety that was based on Ottens' theory was used to collect data, and it was distributed through Google Forms. A paired sample t-test analysis was utilised in order to carry out the data analysis. When the experimental group was compared to the control group, the results showed that the experimental group saw a considerable drop in degrees of academic anxiety. The results of this study suggest that CBGC is an effective method for lowering academic anxiety among students who are enrolled in vocational colleges.

Key Words: Academic anxiety; Cognitive Behavior Group Counseling; Vocational students

INTRODUCTION

Growth and development are two things that always go hand in hand in forming a normal physical and psychological. Age at the adolescent level is an age that is prone to emotional changes in both negative and positive aspects, depending on the environmental conditions that influence. There are adolescent developmental tasks that must be achieved which include physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and moral-spiritual aspects. However, achieving these developmental tasks is not easy, there will be problems that arise in the developmental process (Shinde., et al, 2023; Kilicarslan Toruner.,et al, 2020; Chester.,et al, 2019).

The early adolescent period is a period of significant, in adjusting, so they will feel alienated, lack of attention and feel that no one else cares. The adolescent will have difficulty in controlling themselves, feelings of anger will often arise. These behaviours occur because of anxiety about themselves so that they appear in uncontrolled reactions. According to Habsy, et al (2019) Anxiety is one of the psychological conditions that is often faced in human life, especially in adolescent.

Anxiety is a blurry and unpleasant emotional state or situation accompanied by physical movements such as trembling, and feelings of discomfort (Wahyuni., et al 2023). Lecavalier., et al (2014) define that anxiety is a feeling of worry, fear, and unpleasantness and unclear causes that have a

diffuse nature. Another opinion also states that anxiety is an emotional state that has the characteristics of physiological arousal, unpleasant feelings of tension, and a comprehensive feeling that something bad will happen (Arora, 2022).

According Nursalim., et al (2018), anxiety is an ego function that has the purpose of giving notice to individuals about the possibility of a threat or danger, so that they can prepare appropriate adaptive reactions. Anxiety is a common and normal feeling experienced by a person who is still in the period of personality development (personality development), this is experienced from infancy to 18 years of age and depends on the origin of parental education at home, education at school, the impact of the outside world and social, and experiences in his life (Sartini & Aszrul, 2021). So it can be concluded that anxiety is an unpleasant feeling that can be observed by cognitive reactions such as difficulty concentrating, the emergence of disturbing thoughts, and affective reactions of fear, worry and anxiety. Motor reactions in the form of trembling, dizziness, and sweaty palms against an imminent danger.

Bredemeier., et al (2023) argue that anxiety is influenced by 3 elements, namely feelings of uncertainty, feelings of helplessness, and finally can be focused on the problems faced. Anxiety is caused by several factors, the first of which is environmental factors, the environment around the place of residence can have an impact on the way individuals think about their own or other people's discourse. This is due to unpleasant experiences in individuals with friends, friends, family, or work colleagues.

Stuart., et al (2021) argue that anxiety has 4 levels, mild anxiety to very severe anxiety. Mild anxiety is often associated with tension and makes individuals alert, which can trigger positive things such as motivation to learn and growth of creativity. Conversely, severe anxiety can make a person lose control of their inner strength and excessive panic, which makes individuals tend to cause negative behaviours such as feeling helpless, shortness of breath, trembling, fear of criticism, fear of interacting with others, fear of leaving the house, insomnia, and frequent anger.

Anxiety is divided into several types, for example anxiety in the realm of education which is called academic anxiety. Academic anxiety is a form of disturbed psychological and physical response that comes from feelings of anxiety due to less-than-optimal work when giving academic assignments (Kakar., et al 2022). According to Lei.,et al (2021) academic anxiety is a feeling of worry that arises in students because they feel unable to complete the academic tasks given by the school. Students will have difficulty concentrating on some academic work such as reading, writing, listening, and not having a focus on receiving learning as a result of the academic anxiety experienced (Etherton.,et al, 2022).

Bull.,et al (2020) adolescence is the age of 10-19 years, this age is included in the age of the secondary school level within the scope of the Indonesian territory. In this phase, students have the potential to experience a variety of problems or obstacles related to emotional or erratic psychological conditions, as well as diverse behaviours. The level of academic anxiety experienced by learners varies depending on the influencing factors, there are two factors, namely internal and external. Internal factors include learners' abilities, sensitive feelings, irritability, and unstable or not having a strong education. While external factors include the influence of the family environment, an unsupportive school environment both in terms of friendships and relationships between teachers and students that are not good, as well as a lack of motivation obtained from the social environment, family, and school (Simoës-Perlant, 2022).

Ignacio.,et al (2023) defines the many factors that trigger the onset of academic anxiety, namely curriculum targets that are too high, an unfavourable learning climate, dense assignments, and a strict and unfair assessment system. The unfair and incompetent treatment and attitude of teachers can lead to disharmonious relationships between teachers and students, which in turn results in anxiety in students due to fear and lack of comfort during the learning process. The school management system that applies strict rules and prioritises punishment is a factor in the emergence of anxiety, as well as inadequate facilities and infrastructure.

Academic anxiety with high integrity causes several negative consequences in everyday life and learning (Habsy., 2018). The negative impact caused is shrinking enthusiasm or drive and academic performance, which is anxiety with a negative impact on an ongoing basis. Teaching and learning activities have one goal, namely that individuals can achieve a performance in learning, but in reality not all are able to achieve perfect academic performance (Hikmet Jamil.,et al 2007).

Forms or responses seen due to anxiety such as feelings of concern, fear, physical suffering with symptoms of headaches, body trembling, excessive sweating, and metabolic disorders (Conway.,et al

2017). If the situation continues until the individual is unable to target a dream of academic achievement, it means that anxiety is at a high level and treatment is needed. Anxiety is considered positive if its seriousness is not too great, mild anxiety can manifest a positive stimulus or motivation. Anxiety is considered very large or high will have a negative influence, because it can cause somatic and psychological disorders (Maghfiroh, et al, 2023).

Academic anxiety is an important thing that needs special attention considering the impact caused. Academic anxiety will become a problem when the anxiety controls students making them behave deviantly and eliminating learning motivation which results in decreased learning achievement. If this condition is allowed to drag on, students will not be able to achieve the targeted academic achievement (Dobson, 2012). So it needs to be emphasised again that academic anxiety is not an ordinary problem and needs to be handled by the school or counseling teacher.

Anxiety in this research is a psychological condition of a person who is full of fear and worry, where the feeling cannot be influenced in time and worry that is not clear why, and has a crucial impact on the process of individual personality development. Academic anxiety is anxiety that arises in active school age, excessive concern about academic activities results in decreased student achievement and automatically eliminates motivation to learn. Academic anxiety in this study is measured by Ottens' (1991) theory which includes anxiety patterns that result in mental activity, negative attention, physical distress, and less than perfect behavior.

In overcoming academic anxiety experienced by students, it can be done in various ways, one of which is through counseling services. One approach that can be applied in overcoming students' academic anxiety is the Cognitive Behavior counseling approach. A number of studies have shown that the Cognitive Behavior approach is able to overcome anxiety and increase optimism (Habsy, 2017). The Cognitive Behavior counseling approach focuses on the cognitive and behavior of students, it is hoped that this approach will be able to change irrational thoughts and train the behavior that students bring up to be more adaptive (Beck, 2020). This approach is often applied in overcoming various kinds of psychological problems by applying techniques in the Cognitive Behavior approach.

In this study, the authors apply Cognitive Behavior counseling using cognitive restructuring and homework assigment techniques to overcome academic anxiety. Cognitive restructuring aims to reduce students' academic anxiety by rearranging negative thoughts about academic tasks to become more positive. In addition to the application of cognitive restructuring techniques that focus on students' cognition, researchers also apply homework assignment techniques that focus on giving homework assignments to practice getting used to and internalizing certain value systems that determine the expected behavior patterns. Research conducted by Habsy, (2014) on the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavior group counseling to increase the self-esteem of vocational students. Changing the thoughts and attitudes of the counselee through Cognitive Behavior Counseling is needed to produce counselees able to make decisions and strengthen themselves without relying on others, and being able to manage themselves to be even better (Faricha and Habsy, 2019).

Based on the character of the population and the problems that will occur in the preliminary study, the authors use Cognitive Behavior Counseling in the group form, because group counseling provides opportunities for counselees to express conflicting feelings and explore self-doubt (Corey.,et al 2018). Cognitive behaviour group counselling is a technique deemed effective for addressing issues associated with negative cognitive and behavioural states. Cognitive Behaviour Counselling assists individuals in acquiring new behaviours and strategies for managing circumstances within the academic context. This study investigates the efficacy of Cognitive Behavioural group counselling in alleviating academic anxiety among vocational students.

METHOD

We used a quantitative approach with an experimental design. This study aims to determine whether Cognitive Behavior Group Counseling can useful reduce academic anxiety of vocational students. The selection of the pretest and posttest control group design research design is based on several assumptions that: (1) This research design is the most appropriate among other types of experiments, and can be applied in research in education and psychology, (2) This research design is the

right research design to test hypotheses, because it can provide adequate control so that independent variables can be assessed appropriately, (3) This research design provides adequate control so that it is assumed to be able to draw conclusions appropriately and validly (Cresswell, 2012).

Participants

The study population comprises students classified as exhibiting high academic anxiety traits in vocational high schools. The population comprised 100 individuals divided into 3 classes. The academic anxiety inventory results indicated that the research involved 22 students. A selection was conducted from the population identified as exhibiting high academic anxiety based on the academic anxiety inventory results to establish the experimental and control groups. The selection of research subjects for experimental and control groups is conducted randomly by random assignment techniques. The chosen samples in both the experimental and control groups underwent a pretest utilising an academic anxiety inventory founded on Ottens' (1991) theory of academic anxiety, which comprises four indicators: (1) Anxiety patterns inducing mental activity, (2) Attention exhibiting misdirection, (3) Physical distress, and (4) Inappropriate behaviour.

Procedures

The experimental design employed in this investigation is depicted in Figure 1 as follows:

R1	O1	X	O2
R2	O3	--	O4

Figure 1 Pretest & Posttest Control Group Experiment Design

Description:
- R1 : Random group placement in the experimental group
- O1 : *Pretest* before the subject was given the intervention in the experimental group
- X : Behavioral Cognitive Group Counseling Intervention in the experimental group
- O2 : *Posttest* after the subject was given the intervention in the experimental group
- R2 : Random group placement in the Control group
- O3 : *Pretest* before subjects were given the intervention in the control group
- -- : Reality group counseling intervention in the control group
- O4 : *Posttest* after the subject was given the intervention in the control group

Figure 1 illustrates that this experimental investigation has two groups: the experimental group and the control group. The academic anxiety instrument, grounded in Ottens' (1991) theory of academic anxiety and utilised in this work, demonstrates a reliability coefficient of 0.579, indicating its reliability.

The next activity is the provision of Cognitive Behavior counseling intervention in the experimental group. The implementation of Cognitive Behavioural Group Counselling for the experimental group, in this study, was developed by researchers based on the stages proposed by Corey (2012), and the therapy cycle was based on the formulation of Dobson (2010: 174), and Beck (2011), researchers integrated the cycle in the stages of Cognitive Behavioural Group Counselling counselling. Operationally, the implementation of group counselling for the experimental group contains the procedure for implementing Cognitive Behavioural Group Counselling which consists of three stages, namely: (1) *initial stage*, (2) *working* stage, (3) *final* stage, each stage consists of objectives and steps of counselling implementation.

At the end of the research activities, conducting a *posttest* or measurement again using the same academic anxiety inventory, in the control group and the experimental group to determine the effectiveness of both interventions, but to avoid internal validity of the instrumentation, the researcher randomizes the items on the academic anxiety inventory.

If the decrease in academic anxiety in the experimental group is more significant, which is statistically greater, than the decrease in academic anxiety in the control group, it can be concluded that

the significance of the increase is the effect of cognitive behavioral group counseling intervention. The success of the intervention can be seen from the difference in academic anxiety inventory scores, by comparing before and after the intervention.

To support the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral group counseling in reducing academic anxiety of vocational students in the experimental group, it is controlled by the results achieved by the control group. Visually, the research framework is illustrated in Figure 2 as follows:
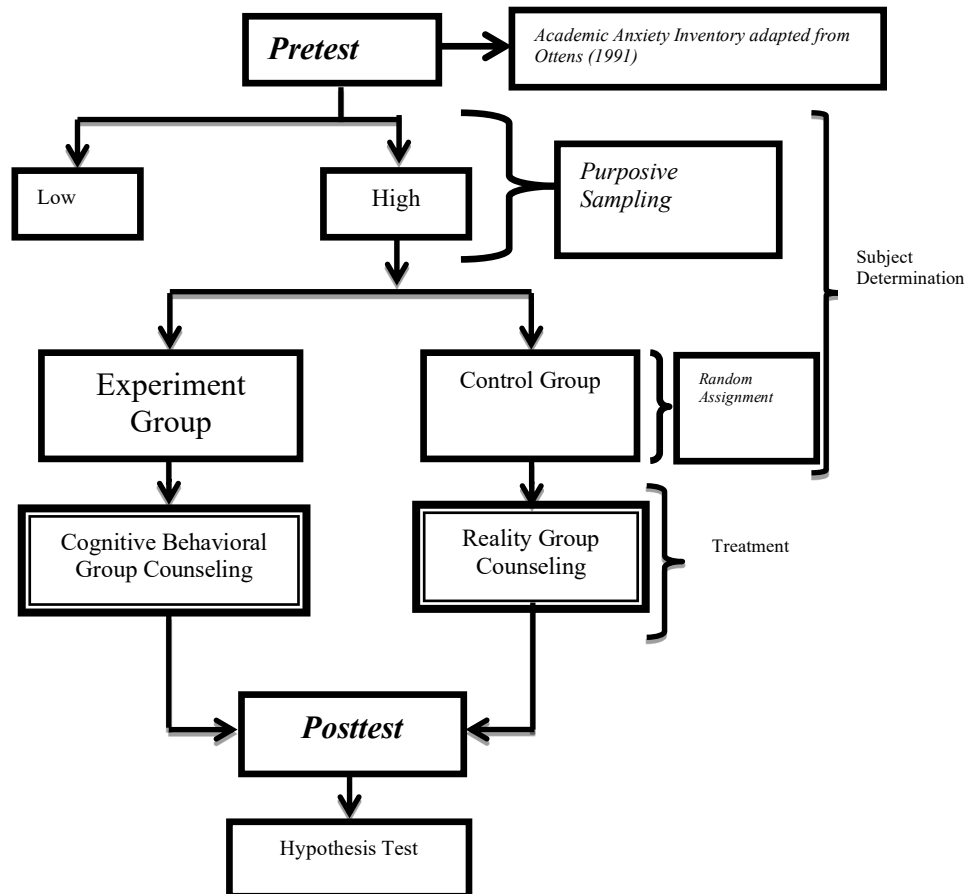
Figure 2 Research Framework

Data Analysis

This study used a paired sample T-test for hypothesis testing. This aligns with the research conducted by scholars aiming to compare the differences between two separate sample groups, specifically the experimental group (A) and the control group (B), which are unrelated and independent of one another. Consequently, it is highly suitable for researchers to employ the Paired Sample T-test to address the prevailing hypothesis. A paired T-Test is a parametric test applicable to two paired datasets. The primary objective of this test is to ascertain whether there exists a consistent mean disparity between two sets of related samples. As they are paired, the data from both samples must be of equal quantity or derived from the same source. If the two samples are not related or do not possess equivalent data quantities, the Independent Sample T-Test is applicable.

RESULTS

Hypothesis testing was carried out to compare the values before and after the provision of rational emotive behavior group counseling. Before carrying out the *Independent Sample T-test*, we conducted a Normality Test and Homogeneity Test as a prerequisite for running the Independent Sample T-test. This analysis aims to ensure the validity and reliability of the data so that the test results can be interpreted accurately.

Decision making based on the normality test, a significance value greater than 0.05 indicates that the data can be considered normally distributed. Based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test table, the Sig. value for all questionnaire results is greater than 0.05. In the pretest of the experimental group, the Sig. value was 0.200, which significantly exceeded the threshold value of 0.05. Similar findings were seen in the experimental group's posttest with a Sig. value of 0.044, which was also significantly greater than 0.05 (0.062 > 0.05). Data analysis of the control group pretest showed a significance value of 0.200, which also exceeded the threshold value of 0.05 (0.620 > 0.05). Similarly, the control group posttest had a significance value of 0.200, exceeding the threshold value of 0.05 (0.200 > 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the data can be considered to have a normal distribution, providing an adequate basis for continuing further analysis in this study. To see whether the data of this study is homogeneous or the same, the results of the test of homogeneity can be seen in the Table 1.

Table 1. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Results	Mean	3,907	1	20	,062
	Median	2,245	1	20	,150
	Median and with adjusted df	2,245	1	13,656	,157
	Based on trimmed mean	3,801	1	20	,065

Table 1 presents the results of the Homogeneity of Variance Test, indicating that the significance level based on the mean difference between the two post-test groups is 0.954. As this value exceeds the threshold of 0.05, it can be concluded that the variances in the Experimental and Control groups are homogeneous, thus supporting the validity of hypothesis testing.

Further analysis using SPSS 25.00 for Windows revealed a t-value of 8.387 with a significance level (Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.000 and degrees of freedom (df) of 10. Comparing this result to the critical t-value at a 5% significance level ($\alpha = 0.05$) with df = 10, which is 3.383, it is evident that the obtained t-value (8.387) exceeds the critical value. Additionally, the p-value (0.000) is significantly lower than the significance level of 0.005. These findings validate the working hypothesis (H_1), which posits that "Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling is effective in reducing academic anxiety among vocational high school students." Conversely, the null hypothesis (H_0), stating that "Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling is not effective in reducing academic anxiety among vocational high school students," is rejected. The results confirm a significant difference between the experimental group, which received Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling, and the control group. This outcome demonstrates the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling in alleviating academic anxiety among vocational high school students. Thus, it substantiates the utility of this counseling approach as an effective intervention for addressing academic anxiety in this population.

Table 2. Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre test	106,27	11	4,735	1,428
	Post test	91,27	11	6,710	2,023

Based on Table 2, the average academic anxiety score of students before receiving Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling was 106.27. Following the intervention, the average score decreased to

91.27. This indicates a reduction in academic anxiety by 15.00 points. These findings provide clear evidence that Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling is an effective intervention for reducing academic anxiety among students.

Table 3. Paired Sampel T-test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. , (2-tailed)
		Mean	S. D	S.E.M	,05% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	pre test - post test	15000	10,488	3,162	14,998	15,002	4,743	10	,001

Table 3 shows a significance level of 0.001, which is below the threshold of 0.005. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H$_0$) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H$_1$) is accepted. This indicates a significant difference in students' academic anxiety levels before and after the intervention using a Cognitive Behavioral approach through group counseling services for class X vocational high school students.

DISCUSSION

This study implemented Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling (CBGC) to address academic anxiety among vocational high school students. The researcher acted as a counselor, applying CBGC to the experimental group and reality group counseling to the control group. The screening process utilized an academic anxiety inventory, identifying participants with high levels of academic anxiety. Additionally, a self-esteem inventory revealed 12 students with low self-esteem, who were subsequently divided into an experimental group and a control group, each comprising six participants.

The study measured changes in academic anxiety levels through pretest and posttest scores, revealing significant reductions in the experimental group. This group, which received the CBGC intervention, demonstrated statistically greater improvements compared to the control group, which underwent traditional group counseling without specific techniques.

These findings align with prior research. For instance, Wolgensinger (2015) established the effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Counseling in managing psychological issues in children. Similarly, Green et al. (2015) demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing adolescents' self-concept in Selangor, Malaysia. Cuijpers et al. (2016) further highlighted the role of Cognitive Behavioral Counseling in improving self-esteem among individuals with depression. Roberge et al. (2022) supported these findings, emphasizing the counseling approach's effectiveness across the lifespan in addressing self-esteem issues.

Distinctively, this study incorporated cognitive restructuring and homework assignment within the CBGC framework, tailored to the developmental stage of vocational students in middle adolescence. This approach adheres to the structured stages of CBGC outlined by Corey et al. (2018), encompassing the initial, working, and final stages, and integrates the therapy cycle proposed by Dobson & Dobson (2018) and Beck (2020).

This research builds on studies such as Situmorang et al. (2018), which compared the effectiveness of CBT group counseling with music therapy techniques in reducing academic anxiety. While those studies focused on supplementary techniques like music therapy, this study emphasizes cognitive restructuring and its standalone efficacy in alleviating academic anxiety. Moreover, the study contributes to a growing body of evidence supporting CBGC's role in addressing negative mindsets (Cahyani & Nuqul, 2019) and reducing academic procrastination (Erfantinni et al., 2016). By focusing on the vocational student population, this research addresses an underexplored demographic and highlights CBGC's potential for broader educational applications.

The study demonstrates that CBGC effectively reduces academic anxiety in vocational students, making it a valuable tool for school counselors and educators. The findings suggest that: (1) for Students: Active participation in CBGC sessions can help students manage and overcome academic anxiety,

improving their overall well-being and academic performance, (2) for Counselors: Guidance and counseling teachers are encouraged to implement CBGC to support students dealing with academic anxiety. These services can complement existing learning methods and foster innovative, motivating educational strategies, and (3) for Future Research: Researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of CBGC by exploring its application to different student populations, psychological variables, and intervention designs.

Study Limitations and Future Directions

This study recognizes several limitations. The academic anxiety inventory, while comprehensive, only measures anxiety globally based on Ottens' (1991) theory, which includes four dimensions: anxiety patterns, misdirected attention, physical stress, and inappropriate behavior. Repeated use of the same inventory may pose internal validity threats. To address this, we randomized inventory items and separated pretest and posttest sessions by sufficient intervals. Additionally, we encountered challenges in simplifying psychological concepts for participants and building initial rapport, suggesting the need for more accessible communication strategies and a focus on relationship-building in early counseling sessions.

CONCLUSION

The results indicate that Cognitive Behavioral Group Counseling is an effective intervention for reducing academic anxiety among vocational students. By addressing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions, CBGC facilitates significant improvements in students' mental well-being.

This research underscores CBGC's potential as a scalable and efficient counseling service, particularly given the limited availability of school counselors relative to student needs. Beyond vocational students, CBGC has applications for diverse educational levels and a range of psychological challenges, offering valuable insights for counselor training programs. Future research should explore CBGC's efficacy across different populations and psychological constructs, further enhancing its role in contemporary educational and psychological practice.

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