

The Effectiveness of a Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Group Setting in Reducing Egocentrism in Bullying Perpetrators

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Abstract

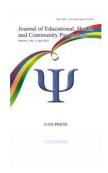
Bullying among adolescents in Indonesia frequently occurs and has shown an increase. Adolescents tend to engage in bullying, partly due to egocentric thinking, which involves difficulty in distinguishing their own perspective from that of others. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of the rational emotive behavior therapy approach in a group setting in reducing the egocentrism of bullying perpetrators. This research employs a quantitative experimental approach using a Control Group Pretest-Posttest design. The study involves 218 students from SMA Negeri 10 Medan who were identified as bullying perpetrators. The sample consists of 16 students selected through purposive sampling. The research instrument is a scale measuring the egocentrism of bullying perpetrators. Data analysis was conducted using the Wilcoxon test and the Mann-Whitney U test. The results indicate that the rational emotive behavior therapy approach is effective in reducing the egocentrism of bullying perpetrators.

Keywords: Rational emotive behavior therapy, egocentrism, bullying, adolescents.

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Introduction

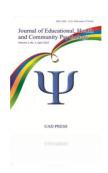
Violence among adolescents, including the phenomenon of bullying, has shown a significant increase (Almizri et al., 2022; Susanti et al., 2023). The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPPA) revealed that in 2022, there were 21,241 reported cases of violence (Sitompul, 2023). Bullying, which often occurs in school environments, is a form of violence that includes physical, sexual, and verbal aspects, negatively impacting the mental and emotional health of adolescents (Kemendikbud, 2020; Oktaviana, 2020; Wirmando et al., 2021). This is due to adolescents



experiencing uncertainty in seeking identity, such as a desire for power and a sense of superiority (Istanti & Yuniardi, 2018).

Bullying is a violent behavior perpetrated by an individual or group repeatedly, abusing power to harm the physical or psychological well-being of the target (Wiyani, 2013; Dorothy & Napolitano, 2009; Olweus, 1993). Bullying has significant negative impacts on victims, particularly in terms of mental health and psychological well-being. These impacts include an increased risk of depression and anxiety that can persist into adulthood (Halliday et al., 2021), as well as a decline in subjective and social well-being (Bermejo et al., 2022). Victims are also more prone to suicide attempts and self-harm behaviors as a result of the psychological pressure caused by bullying (Yang et al., 2021). Bullying also affects the academic performance of victims, leading to decreased academic achievement and school engagement (Vadukapuram et al., 2022). Moreover, victims often experience difficulties in building social relationships, exacerbating feelings of isolation and loneliness (Hamel et al., 2021). It is also not uncommon for victims of bullying to display aggressive behaviors as a response to their suffering, which can further worsen their mental condition (Guo et al., 2022). Ultimately, these impacts can extend into adulthood, affecting the long-term economic and social well-being of victims (Hasnat & Fakir, 2023).

The phenomenon of bullying is common among adolescents because they often exhibit high levels of egocentrism during this stage (Edward, 2006). Egocentrism in adolescents is a characteristic that contributing to the increase in bullying behavior. Egocentrism is the inability to differentiate one's own perspective from that of others, where individuals tend to prioritize their own perspective and situation without considering others (Boyd et al., 2013; Novitasari & Prasetyo, 2020; Munawaroh & Prasetyo, 2019). Research by Hartika & Karneli (2021) shows that bullies tend to have short-sighted thinking and seek quick solutions to problems. Additionally, adolescents are prone to overestimating themselves, underestimating problems and the abilities of others. Research by Menesini & Salmivalli (2017) revealed that adolescents engage in bullying due to a lack of empathy for others and low social skills. Mitsopoulou & Giovazolias (2015) found that most bullies fail to understand the feelings of others and have little awareness of what others are actually thinking.



Bullies perceive their behavior as being justified by their social environment, even granting them a proud social identity. Individuals act based on their perceptions, but each person's perception differs. These differences shape and sustain their egocentrism. If this continues, the individual, especially the bully, may develop a habit and enjoyment of boosting their ego (Budhi, 2018). Relatedly, research by Kristiani & Widodo (2015) revealed that bullies share a common perspective on egocentrism, where egocentric behavior reduces an individual's humanity and makes it difficult for their conscience to be moved.

Egocentric adolescents often exhibit aggressive behavior and experience a decline in self-esteem** (Khairunisa et al., 2022; Hartika & Karneli, 2021). They appear to be self-centered individuals, less collaborative, and do not contribute to group activities, often belittling and refusing to help others (Hurlock, 1990). This egocentrism explains why some adolescents seem selfish, lack empathy, and do not support one another (Shaffer, 2009). Adolescents tend to judge and act based on their own views and judgments, prioritizing themselves because their awareness and thinking have not yet fully developed to assess things properly (Gunarsa, 1978).

Based on data received by researchers from counseling teachers at a public high school, there are reports of bullying issues, including verbal, physical, and cyberbullying among students. The bullies exhibit characteristics such as feeling unique, always wanting to be the center of attention, always thinking they are right, bothering friends, mocking others, disregarding the feelings of others, being unable to cooperate with peers, showing off, belittling others, and disregarding others' opinions. These behaviors indicate a state of egocentrism. Research by Landicho et al. (2014) suggests that adolescents experiencing egocentrism believe that others are interested in them because they consider themselves unique and invincible.

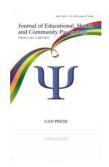
In schools, to ensure the success of educational programs, counseling teachers can optimize their role as agents of change, prevention, counselors/therapists, consultants, coordinators, assessors, and career developers (Ratnasari & Neviyarni, 2021). The role of counseling teachers becomes crucial in detecting, preventing, and addressing bullying cases. Counseling approaches such as Rational Emotive



Behavior Therapy (REBT), proposed for implementation in a group setting, are expected to reduce egocentrism and bullying behavior among students. This approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of rational thinking, emotions, and behavior. Problematic behavior arises from irrational thought patterns. This approach focuses on restructuring irrational thought patterns to become more rational, thereby promoting healthy behavior (Gladding, 2019).

Ellis and Dryden (2003) describe Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) as an approach that prioritizes changes in thinking and behavior to understand emotional responses. This approach aims to correct attitudes, perceptions, thinking patterns, beliefs, and views from irrational to rational, allowing individuals to achieve optimal self-development (Fauziah et al., 2020). REBT emphasizes the role of attitudes and thoughts in shaping behavior, which can help individuals with high levels of egocentrism reduce their negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, including bullying. REBT focuses on changing irrational thought patterns into rational ones, which has proven effective in managing negative emotions and behaviors in adolescents and improving their well-being (Corey, 2017; Erismon & Karneli, 2021).

In efforts to create a safe and supportive educational environment, better integration of counseling approaches like REBT with school policies is essential. This step is expected to reduce incidents of violence and other harmful behaviors among students while involving the active roles of teachers, parents, and the community holistically (Khaira & Firman, 2017). Research combining REBT counseling in reducing egocentrism among bullies is still limited; therefore, this study is expected to contribute to understanding the causes, developing theories, and creating more effective interventions to address egocentrism in bullies. By deepening the understanding of how egocentrism plays a role in bullying behavior, better strategies can be designed to prevent and address bullying while enhancing the psychological and social well-being of adolescents. Thus, addressing bullying issues will not only focus on individual interventions but also on developing a positive social environment for children and adolescents, particularly in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in a group setting for reducing egocentrism in bullies. The goal of this research is to evaluate the intervention of REBT in reducing egocentrism among bullies in a group setting.



Method

Design

This study employed a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Experimental design. Participants were randomly allocated in a 1:1 ratio to either the experimental group or the control group. This research is quantitative research with a positivistic paradigm. Quantitative research will produce measurable data because it is based on the data produced (Firman, 2018). The study adhered to the guidelines of the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) (Butcher et al, 2022; Eldridge et al., 2016; Moher et al., 2012; Hopewell et al., 2008), World Medical Association Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, (2013) last updated in 2013, and the International Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects.

Participants

Subject Selection Process

The subject selection process involved screening 457 high school students at a school to identify those who were potential perpetrators of bullying. The screening was conducted using a bullying perpetrator scale. After administering the instrument, 218 students were identified as bullying perpetrators. Subsequently, the researchers administered an egocentrism scale to the students identified as bullying perpetrators. From this, it was found that 161 students were indicated to have high egocentrism (scores < 76). Out of these 161 students, 16 were randomly selected and divided into two groups: the experimental group, which received treatment in the form of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in a group setting, and the control group, which only received group counseling services. REBT is quite effective for group settings consisting of 8 to 10 individuals (Ellis, A., & Dryden, 1997).

Interventions

After determining the groups, the intervention was carried out, with the control group receiving group counseling and the experimental group receiving counseling using Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in a group setting. This study was conducted by an experienced counselor. The services were provided once a week, with each session lasting 45 minutes, over the course of five meetings.

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The group counseling sessions using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy approach were conducted once a week for five weeks (Ellis & Dryden, 1997). The study was conducted from May 2 to June 11, 2024 (both the experimental and control groups). The procedures for the group-based Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy approach are outlined in Table 1 below.

Table I

Rational Emotive Behavior Approach Procedure

REBT Approach Counseling Services in a Group Setting

Service Activity Steps:

A. Opening Phase

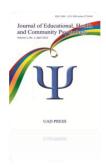
- 1. The group leader begins with a greeting, prayer, and welcomes the group members.
- 2. The group leader explains that everything discussed within the group remains confidential.
- 3. The group leader asks group members to introduce themselves and proceeds with some questions and light discussion.
- 4. The group leader asks the group members to identify their issues and express their feelings.
- 5. The group leader prompts the group members to think about the problems they are facing.
- 6. Group members share events or experiences that have occurred in their lives.

B. Activity Phase

- 1. The group leader provides an opportunity for group members to share their issues, events, or experiences.
- 2. The counseling teacher/counselor explains the concept, goals, and implementation of the REBT approach.
- 3. The counselor explains the ABCDE theory, where:
- Antecedent event (A): The group leader discusses the group members' problems, focusing on events or incidents related to egocentrism issues in bullying behavior.
- Belief (B): The group leader invites the members to express their beliefs regarding the egocentrism issues in their bullying behavior, addressing both rational and irrational thoughts, while each member shares their thoughts and understanding of the problems they are experiencing.
- Emotional Consequence (C): The group leader encourages the members to identify the emotional consequences, which are the emotional responses, such as feelings of satisfaction or emotional barriers, in relation to the egocentrism issues in their bullying behavior.
- Disputing (D): The counseling teacher/counselor guides the group members in challenging their irrational beliefs by providing materials on building tolerance and social acceptance related to the egocentrism issues in their bullying behavior (stopping irrational thoughts and formulating rational thoughts).
- Effect (E): The final stage, where the group members' thinking will be opened up to resolving the issues they are facing.

C. Closing Phase

- 1. Group members express their positive or negative feelings about the activity.
- 2. Group members summarize the outcomes they have gained.
- 3. The group leader and members agree on the schedule for the next meeting.
- 4. The group leader announces the end of the activity.
- 5. The group leader distributes worksheets and asks the members to complete them.
- 6. The group leader leads a closing prayer, says goodbye, and expresses gratitude.



Outcomes

The instrument used in this study was an egocentrism scale for bullying perpetrators. This instrument for reducing egocentrism among bullying perpetrators was developed based on the operational definition of the variable. The instrument contains statements aimed at assessing the reduction of egocentrism in bullying perpetrators. The development process involved creating a framework for the variable, which was then broken down into indicators and subsequently into aspects to be measured. These aspects were further elaborated into specific statements within the instrument. The following steps were taken: (1) creating an instrument framework based on the theory for each variable, (2) developing indicators for each variable, and (3) constructing the statements. A rational analysis was then conducted to assess the alignment of each item with the variable indicators and the accuracy of the items in measuring the intended aspects. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this scale is 0.874, with item-total correlations ranging from 0.351 to 0.785.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted using the Wilcoxon test and the Mann-Whitney U test. The data were processed and analyzed using SPSS Version 25.00.

Result

Table 2 displays the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, which assessed the changes in scores between the pretest and posttest in the experimental group. The Z value of -2.521 indicates a deviation from the null hypothesis, suggesting a significant difference in the scores. The p-value of .012 further supports this finding, as it is below the commonly used significance level of 0.05. This implies that the observed change in scores is statistically significant, and we reject the null hypothesis, concluding that the intervention had a meaningful effect. The test's calculation was based on positive ranks, which means it focused on the differences where posttest scores were higher than pretest scores. Overall, these results demonstrate that the intervention successfully led to a significant improvement or change in the experimental group's scores.



Table 2
Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test in experimental group

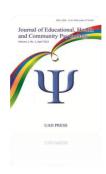
	Posttest	Experimental	-	Pretest
	Experimental			
Z	-2.521			
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012			

<u>Table 3</u> presents the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, which was used to analyze the difference in egocentrism reduction among bullying perpetrators between the pretest and posttest in the control group. The test statistic, Z, is -2.524, with an asymptotic significance (p-value) of 0.012. This p-value indicates a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level, suggesting that there was a meaningful reduction in egocentrism in the control group between the pretest and posttest. The negative Z value and the significant p-value imply that the observed decrease in egocentrism is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

Table 3
Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test in the Control Group

	Posttest - Pretest Control group	
Z	-2.524	
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	

<u>Table 2</u> presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test comparing the experimental and control groups. The Mann-Whitney U value is reported as 0.000, indicating a significant difference between the groups. The Z-value of -3.366 suggests that the observed difference is substantial and in a direction consistent with the hypotheses of the study. The asymptotic significance (2-tailed) value is



0.001, which is below the conventional alpha level of 0.05. This low p-value indicates that the difference between the experimental and control groups is statistically significant, suggesting that the intervention had a meaningful impact on the measured outcomes.

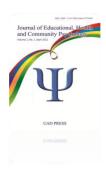
Table 4
Results of Mann-Whitney Test for Experimental and Control Groups

Experimental-c	ontrol group
Mann-Whitney U	.000.
Z	-3.366
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.001

Discussion

Based on the analysis results above, it is evident that there is a significant difference in the reduction of egocentrism among bullying perpetrators in high school between the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group showed a greater decrease in egocentrism scores compared to the control group. This indicates that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is more effective in reducing egocentrism than standard counseling. Therefore, the group setting approach of REBT is more effective in reducing egocentrism among bullying perpetrators.

Based on the existing research, it is known that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) has significant effectiveness in reducing egocentrism among bullying perpetrators in high school students. This study found that the group receiving REBT intervention showed a greater decrease in egocentrism scores compared to the control group, which only received standard counseling. These findings are consistent with recent studies that demonstrate the effectiveness of REBT in various contexts, including reducing verbal bullying behavior and improving students' psychological well-being. For example, research by Alfiah et al. (2022) showed that group guidance using the REBT approach significantly reduced verbal bullying behavior among students (Alfiah et al., 2022) Additionally, other studies confirm that REBT is effective in addressing various emotional and behavioral issues related to bullying, including social anxiety and aggressive behavior (Melati et al., 2022; Utami & Pudjiati, 2019). Overall, the REBT approach in a group setting has proven to be more effective than standard



counseling in reducing egocentrism among bullying perpetrators, which in turn can help create a more positive and supportive school environment.

Several recent studies on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) show the effectiveness of this approach in various mental health and educational contexts. For instance, a study in Nigeria showed that REBT is effective in reducing depressive symptoms in medical students, and this positive change persists in the long term after the intervention (Victor-Aigbodion et al., 2023). In Bali, the REBT approach was shown to successfully improve the self-esteem and mental health of orphaned adolescents facing various psychological challenges (Amalia et al., 2023). Furthermore, other research indicates that integrating REBT principles with patients' religious beliefs can effectively address mental health issues such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety (Eseadi, 2023). In Nigeria, REBT has also proven effective in reducing work-related stress among physics teachers, suggesting that this approach can help teachers manage their stress more effectively (Ugwuanyi, 2023). Additionally, other studies reveal that group counseling with an REBT approach is effective in reducing students' anxiety during exams, helping them to cope with academic stress significantly (Arnita & Netrawati, 2023). These studies confirm that REBT is a versatile and effective approach in addressing various emotional and psychological issues.

The implementation of counseling using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy approach in a group setting has successfully demonstrated a reduction in the level of egocentrism among bullying perpetrators. This approach involves a series of stages: A (activating event), B (beliefs), C (emotional consequences), D (disputing irrational beliefs), and E (effects on the client's psychological state). As described by Ellis and Dryden (2003), REBT focuses on changing ways of thinking and acting to improve emotional responses and achieve optimal self-growth. Research by Fauziah et al. (2020) shows that this therapy is based on the understanding that human cognition, emotion, and behavior are holistically interconnected. The goal is to transform core irrational beliefs into rational ones, allowing individuals to develop and achieve optimal self-realization, in line with the views of Gladding (2009) and Khaira & Firman (2017).



Before treatment, students who engage in bullying behavior tend to exhibit signs of egocentrism, such as feeling unique, wanting to stand out, believing they are always right, disturbing others, and being indifferent to others' feelings. However, after receiving treatment, students were able to understand that their previous ways of thinking, reacting, and acting were inappropriate. They began to appreciate others' feelings, cooperate, and value others' perspectives more. These changes were observed by school counselors in daily activities and were evident in school events like art exhibitions. The positive responses from students to the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy treatment were also reflected in the evaluation results.

The REBT approach can help in understanding the root causes of egocentrism among bullying perpetrators. This theory emphasizes that irrational and rigid thinking (e.g., feeling entitled to dominate or belittle others) can lead to bullying behavior. By understanding these flawed cognitive processes, research can highlight the importance of replacing these thoughts with more rational and adaptive thinking. The REBT approach, which focuses on the interconnection between emotions (such as anger or dissatisfaction) and aggressive behavior like bullying, can further explore how unmanaged emotions influence the thoughts and behaviors of bullying perpetrators and how REBT interventions can alter these patterns.

The REBT approach serves as an alternative that encourages a shift from egocentric attitudes to more empathetic and realistic self-acceptance. Research can explore how this approach affects the bullying perpetrators' views of themselves and others. Research can develop intervention programs using the REBT approach designed to reduce levels of egocentrism and bullying behavior among students, including group counseling sessions focused on identifying and changing harmful or irrational thought patterns.

The practical implications of this research include training for counselors/school guidance teachers on how to use REBT principles to help bullying perpetrators overcome their egocentrism. This can expand their ability to provide effective support to bullying perpetrators. Research can include the development of instruments to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of the REBT approach in reducing egocentrism and bullying behavior. This ensures that the approach is not only theoretically

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effective but can also be applied with positive results in practical settings.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

The limitations of this study include the fact that the sample was limited to students who were bullying perpetrators, so the findings cannot be generalized to a broader student population. Future research is recommended to delve deeper into egocentrism in relation to other issues that may provide broader insights.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is proven to be more effective in reducing egocentrism among high school bullying perpetrators compared to standard counseling methods. The more significant reduction in egocentrism observed in the experimental group receiving REBT indicates that this approach may be a superior intervention for addressing egocentric behavior in adolescents involved in bullying. Therefore, REBT can be considered an effective method for reducing this negative behavior in school settings.

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Author Contribution Statement

The author was responsible for proposing the research idea and design, designing the study, creating the module, writing the initial draft of the publication manuscript, coordinating the research implementation, and revising the publication manuscript. The academic advisor assisted in developing the research idea, guided the module creation, guided the drafting of the publication manuscript, and coordinated the research implementation.

Conflict of Interest

The researchers declare that this paper has no conflicts of interest.

Author Contribution

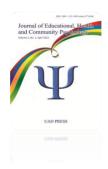
All authors have contributed equally to the study's conceptualization, interpreting data, reviewing, and editing the manuscript.

Data Availability

Data can be provided upon request to the author.

Declarations Ethical Statement

The study followed the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki.



Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all persons involved in the study.

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