

Harnessing Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Thought Stopping Techniques: Transformative Group Counseling to Combat Sexual Violence among Inmates

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Abstract

Sexual violence is a social phenomenon that remains widespread in Indonesia, involving not only adults but also children, both as victims and perpetrators. One form of sexual violence includes physical actions such as kissing, touching, and penetration, which stem from negative thoughts. Interventions are needed to address this behavior, one of which is group counseling based on Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) with the *thought stopping* technique. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of group counseling using CBT with the *thought stopping* technique in reducing sexual violence behavior among inmates. The research employs a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental design. The sample consists of 10 inmates in the experimental group and 10 in the control group, selected using purposive sampling. The instrument used is a questionnaire with a Likert scale, and data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Two Independent Samples, supported by SPSS version 26.0. The results show that: (1) the experimental group experienced a significant reduction in sexual violence behavior, reaching a low category; (2) the control group remained in the moderate category; (3) there were significant differences before and after the intervention between the experimental and control groups. Group counseling using CBT with the *thought stopping* technique is proven effective and can serve as an alternative intervention to address sexual violence.

Keywords: Group counseling, cognitive behavior therapy, thought stopping.

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Introduction

Sexual violence remains a persistent social issue across various layers of society (Egenti et al., 2023; Geppert et al., 2023). This phenomenon is evident from the widespread reports of sexual abuse and violence in the mass media, including television, social media, and everyday interactions (García-Moreno et al., 2015; Grose et al., 2020). According to data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (PPA), 4,683 cases of sexual violence against children were recorded in 2022 (Sitompul, 2023). Sexual violence refers to criminal acts involving non-consensual sexual activity (Ede et al., 2022). In the social environment, the influence of media presenting

pornographic content—such as newspapers, television, the internet, and magazines—contributes to a lack of proper understanding of sexuality (Coker et al., 2002; Brooks-Gordon et al., 2006; De Lemos Schuler et al., 2024). The information acquired from such media is often superficial and unstructured, fueling phenomena such as promiscuity, extramarital sexual relations, and unwanted pregnancies (Rumble et al., 2020).

The phenomenon of sexual violence is not limited to major cities but has also spread to smaller towns across Indonesia. Data from correctional facilities indicate the presence of 113 perpetrators of sexual violence, with most of them falling within the early adulthood age range of 18-40 years (Afandi, 2018). Sexual violence is typically coercive, causing significant impacts on both perpetrators and victims (Harrison et al., 2020). Physically, sexual violence constitutes a form of criminal assault. Perpetrators often engage in such acts to satisfy their sexual urges, forcing victims into compliance (Moulding et al., 2020). This includes not only forced sexual intercourse but also behaviors such as touching or even merely looking with a specific intent (Rumble et al., 2020). These findings align with studies showing that sexual violence involves exploiting individuals in sexual activities, including rape and harassment (Rosyadi, 2016; Suyanto et al., 2020).

Farida (2022) defines sexual violence as any act that degrades, humiliates, or assaults an individual's body in relation to sexual desires or reproductive functions. Such acts are carried out forcibly, against the victim's will, or under conditions where the victim is unable to provide consent. Sexual violence can result in physical, psychological, and sexual suffering, as well as economic, social, cultural, or political harm (Abshar, 2024; Retnaningsih et al., 2017). Given the increasing prevalence of this issue, there is a pressing need for comprehensive approaches, both preventive and curative, to address sexual violence effectively (Lukman et al., 2020).

Sexual violence encompasses various forms, including physical violence, psychological or emotional abuse, economic abuse, and sexual harassment. According to Rosjayani et al. (2023), any act driven by gender disparities that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women—including threats, coercion, or arbitrary restrictions on their freedom in public or private life—can be categorized as sexual violence. As highlighted by Devries et al. (2013), gender-based violence significantly impacts women's mental and physical health.

This study focuses on the issue of sexual violence perpetrated by offenders against victims who are not their lawful partners. Such actions include kissing, touching, and penetrating the victims, often committed repeatedly against the same individual (Geppert et al., 2023). Offenders frequently harbor negative thoughts, believing that these actions are expressions of love or affection for the victims, despite eventually experiencing regret for their behavior (García-Moreno et al., 2015).

To address this issue, the authors propose group counseling based on Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) utilizing the thought-stopping technique. This technique aims to halt negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones (Apsche et al., 2004). According to Beck (2011), CBT focuses on resolving clients' current problems by linking thought processes with emotions, behaviors, and psychological conditions. Its goal is to help clients evaluate how their thoughts influence their behaviors (Beck et al., 2004; Beck, 2011). Thought-stopping, as explained by Badriyah (2020), is a method to

transform negative thoughts into neutral, positive, and assertive ones. McKay et al., (2007) further highlight its effectiveness in helping individuals troubled by negative thoughts. Research also indicates that CBT is effective in reducing risky behaviors among individuals with psychological disorders (Hofmann et al., 2012; Butler et al., 2006).

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has been explored as a treatment to reduce recidivism among sexual offenders, with some studies incorporating thought-stopping techniques (Hofmann et al., 2012). The research indicates that CBT can be effective in reducing recidivism rates among adult sexual offenders, although the application of thought-stopping techniques specifically remains under-researched (Kim et al., 2019).

Studies show that CBT significantly reduces recidivism rates among moderate and high-risk sexual offenders. Recidivism rates for those receiving CBT ranged from 0.6% to 21.8%, compared to 4.5% to 32.3% for those receiving other interventions (Mpofu et al., 2018). This suggests that CBT is an effective modality for preventing reoffense (Mpofu et al., 2018). A meta-analysis found significant overall effect sizes for reducing sexual and violent recidivism through CBT programs. However, there is heterogeneity in effect sizes, indicating variability in treatment effectiveness across different studies and decades (Harrison et al., 2020)

When CBT is supplemented with PBCC, there is a notable improvement in self-control and mental health among offenders, including reductions in depression, anxiety, and anger (Kelley et al., 2021). This suggests that integrating additional therapeutic principles can enhance the effectiveness of CBT. A study in Nigeria demonstrated that CBII could effectively change violent sexual attitudes among offenders, with sustained improvements observed over time (Ede et al., 2022). This highlights the potential for CBT adaptations to address specific cognitive distortions related to sexual violence.

CBT is a promising approach for reducing recidivism among sexual offenders, with evidence supporting its efficacy in various forms (Kim et al., 2019). While the specific application of thought-stopping techniques within CBT for sexual violence is not extensively covered, the integration of additional therapeutic elements like PBCC and CBII shows potential for enhancing outcomes (Butler et al., 2006). Future research should focus on these adaptations and their impact on behavior change to develop more effective interventions.

Research on the application of CBT with thought-stopping techniques to address sexual violence among adult offenders remains limited. Therefore, this study aims to contribute to understanding the causes of sexual violence, advancing theories, and developing more effective approaches to address it. By gaining deeper insights into offender behavior, better strategies can be designed to combat sexual violence, not only among adults but also among children and adolescents in Indonesia (Kazantzis et al., 2017). Specifically, this study aims to investigate the effectiveness of CBT with thought-stopping techniques in addressing sexual violence among adult offenders in group settings (Kazdin, 2011; Dobson & Dobson, 2009; Foa et al., 2005).

Method

Design

This study employed a pretest-posttest controlled group design. Participants were randomly assigned to either the control or experimental group. The study adhered to the guidelines of the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials (CONSORT) (Hopewell et al., 2008; Moher et al., 2010; Eldridge et al., 2016; Butcher et al., 2022).

Participants

The participants in this study were incarcerated individuals convicted of sexual violence offenses, serving sentences of more than one year. The sample consisted of 10 individuals in the experimental group and 10 in the control group, randomly selected. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 40 years old. Their involvement in the study was voluntary, and all participants provided informed consent after a detailed explanation of the study was given. The study was conducted from August 12, 2024, to October 22, 2024.

Module

The intervention module employed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with a thought-stopping technique. Before its application, the module was evaluated through professional judgment. Two experts with doctoral degrees in guidance and counseling were involved in reviewing the intervention design. Based on their feedback, the researchers revised the intervention module. Subsequently, the module was piloted with a small group of subjects to gather additional feedback.

The intervention sessions were conducted by an experienced counselor with a Master's degree in guidance and counseling. The intervention was provided once a week, with each session lasting 2 x 45 minutes, over a total of five meetings. The group counseling procedure based on the cognitive behavioral therapy approach with the thought-stopping technique was structured as follows:

Table 1

Content of CBT Thought-Stopping Technique

Stage	Contents
<i>Initial Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The counselor greets the participants and expresses gratitude for their willingness to join the activity. b. Pray together before starting the activity. c. Explain the purpose and objectives of the activity. d. Explain the principle of confidentiality. e. Explain the implementation process of group counseling. f. Explain the rules for the activity. g. Communicate the agreed schedule. h. Build rapport with group members through introductions.
<i>Transition Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Asking participants about their readiness for the service b. Explaining the activities that will be conducted next c. Building trust between the leader and group members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Group support for resolution. b. The client (the group member whose issue is being discussed) provides a more detailed explanation of the problem they are

Stage	Contents
<i>Working Stage</i>	<p>experiencing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">c. All group members participate in discussing the client's problem through various methods, such as asking questions, explaining, critiquing, giving examples, sharing personal experiences, and offering suggestions.d. The client is given the opportunity to respond to feedback and input from group members.e. The counselor assists the client in resolving their issue using the thought-stopping technique.f. The client and counselor collaboratively decide which thoughts will be targeted in the thought-stopping procedure.g. The client closes their eyes and imagines a situation where the target thoughts are likely to arise.h. The target thoughts are interrupted by the command "stop."i. The unwanted thoughts are then replaced with more positive thoughts.
<i>Final Stage</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Group members express the thoughts and feelings that arise during the group activity.b. The counselor provides a summary of the discussion on the issues addressed, offering support.c. Group members share the benefits they have gained from the discussion activities.d. Discussing follow-up activities, where service participants agree to continue the session next week.

Measurement

The instrument used in this study is a sexual violence behavior scale adapted from the research of Ede et al. (2022) and Egenti et al. (2023), which was subsequently modified by the researchers. This instrument contains statements aimed at assessing the reduction of sexual violence behaviors. These aspects are detailed into specific statements. The steps taken include: (1) creating an instrument grid based on the theoretical framework of each variable, (2) developing indicators for each variable, and (3) constructing statement items, followed by rational analysis to assess the alignment of each item with the variable indicators and the accuracy of item construction in measuring the intended aspects (Azwar, 2012).

This study employed content validity through professional judgment evaluation. Two experts with doctoral degrees in counseling guidance were involved in evaluating the items on the scale. After selecting the valid items, the internal consistency reliability method was used to test its reliability coefficient. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this sexual violence behavior scale was $\alpha = 0.831$.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in this study was conducted using the Wilcoxon test and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov 2 Independent Samples test. Data were processed and analyzed using SPSS Version 26.00.

Results

The total data in this study involved 20 participants, randomly divided into two groups. The experimental group consisted of 10 individuals, and the control group also consisted of 10 individuals, both of which underwent pretest and posttest assessments. Specifically, this study aimed to determine the effectiveness of group counseling services using a cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) approach with the thought-stopping technique to address sexual violence among adults.

The first hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in sexual violence among participants in the experimental group before and after receiving group counseling services using cognitive behavior therapy with the thought-stopping technique. This hypothesis was tested using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test statistical analysis. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test for sexual violence among participants between the pretest and posttest in the experimental group yielded a value of $z = -2.805$, $p = .005$. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. Therefore, the first hypothesis was supported, indicating a significant difference in sexual violence among participants in the experimental group before and after receiving group counseling services using cognitive behavior therapy with the thought-stopping technique.

The second hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in sexual violence among participants in the control group before and after receiving counseling services without specific interventions. This hypothesis was tested using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test statistical analysis, which yielded a value of $z = 0.987$, $p = .07$. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_0) was accepted, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was rejected. Thus, the second hypothesis was not supported, indicating no significant difference in sexual violence among participants in the control group before and after receiving group counseling services without specific interventions.

The third hypothesis stated that there would be a significant difference in sexual violence between participants in the experimental group, who received group counseling services using cognitive behavior therapy with the thought-stopping technique, and the control group, who received group counseling services without specific interventions. This hypothesis was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov 2 Independent Samples statistical analysis, yielding a value of $z = 1.565$, $p = .015$. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H_0) was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) was accepted. Therefore, the third hypothesis was supported, indicating a significant difference in sexual violence between participants in the experimental group and the control group.

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that group counseling services using a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach with thought-stopping techniques are more effective in reducing sexual violence behavior compared to group counseling services without specific interventions. Statistical analysis using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov 2 Independent Samples test produced a z-value of 1.565 with $p=0.015$, which

is below the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. These findings confirm that CBT-based interventions with thought-stopping techniques have a significant impact on the behavior of individuals in the experimental group compared to the control group.

This discovery aligns with previous literature demonstrating the effectiveness of CBT in addressing various maladaptive behaviors, including violence and aggression. For instance, research by Beck et al. (2011) highlighted CBT's effectiveness in reducing aggression through cognitive restructuring and emotional regulation. Additionally, thought-stopping techniques have been shown to help halt obsessive or impulsive thoughts that often trigger risky behaviors. Watkins et al. (2013) found that this technique significantly reduces intrusive thoughts associated with negative repetitive behaviors.

Cognitive theory posits that human behavior is influenced by how individuals process information and think (Beck et al., 2004; Beck, 2011). In this context, negative thoughts or cognitive dysfunction can trigger maladaptive behaviors, such as sexual violence. The CBT approach focuses on identifying and altering these negative thought patterns through cognitive restructuring and behavioral interventions (Beck et al., 1979). For instance, thought-stopping techniques are designed to help individuals interrupt and redirect negative thoughts that could trigger undesirable behaviors (Hofmann et al., 2012). This process encourages clients to replace destructive thoughts with more positive and rational ones.

The study's results showed that group counseling services using a CBT approach with thought-stopping techniques were more effective in reducing sexual violence behavior than services without specific interventions. This effectiveness can be attributed to the structured interventions applied in CBT, which provide individuals with a framework to understand and modify the thoughts and beliefs underlying their behaviors (Beck et al., 2004; Beck, 2011; Okamoto et al., 2019). Additionally, group dynamics foster social support, reinforcing behavioral changes. This aligns with Bandura's social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the importance of the social environment in behavioral learning (Bandura, 1986).

Recent research supports the use of CBT in addressing maladaptive behaviors (Dobson & Dobson, 2009). For example, a study by Kazantzis et al. (2023) found that group-based CBT significantly reduced problematic behaviors by improving emotional regulation and problem-solving skills. Techniques like thought stopping also proved effective in reducing stress and anxiety, which often trigger negative behaviors. Thus, these findings highlight the importance of cognitive theory-based approaches in effectively addressing sexual violence behavior.

A previous study indicates that CBT plays a significant role in reducing recidivism rates among moderate- and high-risk sexual offenders, with consistent declines in recidivism rates over time for those undergoing CBT (Mpofu et al., 2018). These findings highlight CBT as an effective approach for preventing reoffense (Mpofu et al., 2018). A meta-analysis further confirmed substantial overall effect sizes for reducing sexual and violent recidivism through CBT programs, although variability in effectiveness across studies and time periods suggests heterogeneity in treatment outcomes (Harrison et al., 2020).

When CBT is combined with Positive Behavioral and Cognitive Change (PBCC), offenders exhibit significant improvements in self-control and mental health, with marked reductions in depression, anxiety, and anger (Kelley et al., 2021). This suggests that integrating complementary therapeutic frameworks can enhance CBT outcomes. Moreover, a study in Nigeria demonstrated that Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Individuals (CBII) effectively reshaped violent sexual attitudes among offenders, with positive changes persisting over time (Ede et al., 2022). This underscores CBT's adaptability in addressing specific cognitive distortions linked to sexual violence.

In implementing group counseling services, participants are given opportunities to respond to one another while the group leader solicits feedback from each member regarding the negative feelings arising from the sexual violence actions of other members. Group counseling services without specific interventions can help offenders understand that sexual violence is inappropriate behavior, thereby increasing their self-awareness.

The group leader plays a crucial role as a model for group members, demonstrating characteristics such as confidence, presence, motivational ability, willingness to take risks, empathy, acceptance, readiness to set examples, a sense of humor, teamwork skills, positive encouragement, and the ability to explore members' potential (Ardi et al., 2019).

The thought-stopping technique, as part of CBT, replaces negative or uncomfortable responses with more appropriate alternatives. This technique aims to stop unwanted intrusive or negative thoughts, including those that drive behaviors like sexual violence (O'Neill & Whittal, 2002). Research shows that thought stopping is a specific form of cognitive suppression highly effective in enhancing clients' problem-solving abilities (Erford, 2016). It has also proven effective for individuals experiencing social anxiety (Bulantika et al., 2019). In group counseling, all issues experienced by offenders are addressed through CBT with thought-stopping techniques. Each group member is expected to apply what they have learned during the counseling process, ensuring that sexual violence is eliminated and does not recur. Additionally, counselors utilize group dynamics to create an atmosphere where members feel valued, are given opportunities to express their opinions, and are taught to listen and share thoughts.

The results of this study not only strengthen previous findings but also provide significant contributions to developing psychological intervention methods for sexual violence offenders. This approach underscores the need for evidence-based interventions focused on cognitive restructuring as a key element in behavioral therapy. By integrating thought-stopping techniques, this therapy can become a more specific and targeted intervention model, particularly for addressing behaviors driven by maladaptive thought patterns. The practical implications include the need for further training for counselors to effectively implement this technique and additional research to evaluate its impact in broader contexts, such as in preventing sexual violence in communities.

The implications for guidance and counseling practice are that topics discussed in group counseling need to be tailored to the issues faced by group members, focusing on the negative thoughts that trigger negative behaviors related to sexual violence. Implementing group counseling with thought-stopping techniques enables group members to share their experiences and thoughts while providing feedback on fellow members' opinions. It is recommended that group members have heterogeneous

characteristics to foster a richer exchange of ideas and perspectives. Thus, group counseling activities using thought-stopping techniques can more effectively address issues of sexual violence.

Conclusion

The provision of group counseling services using the Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) approach with the thought-stopping technique is an effective and rapid method to help individuals overcome negative thoughts and worries commonly associated with panic disorders, anxiety, and agoraphobia. This technique is based on the individual's ability to consciously give themselves a command by saying "stop" when experiencing recurring, irrelevant, or distorted negative thoughts. Subsequently, individuals are taught to replace these negative thoughts with more positive and realistic ones. Group counseling services have been shown to be more effective when employing the thought-stopping technique compared to group counseling without specific interventions.

The research results demonstrate a significant difference in the level of sexual violence among perpetrators in the experimental group before and after participating in CBT-based group counseling services with the thought-stopping technique, compared to the control group that only received group counseling services without specific interventions. These findings indicate that CBT-based group counseling services with the thought-stopping technique are effective in reducing sexual violence behavior among inmates. Therefore, this approach can serve as a superior strategy compared to group counseling services without specific interventions.

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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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