



The Role of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in Increasing the Self-Esteem of Female Prisoners

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ABSTRACT

The experience of women being prisoners causes a decrease in self-esteem (self-esteem). Various studies have found that low self-esteem is associated with anxiety, depression, and suicide. This condition can worsen the mental health of female prisoners while in prison. Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is a treatment method that has been widely applied to psychological problems such as depression and suicide. This study aimed to identify the effects of CBT with rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) on increasing the self-esteem of female prisoners. The study used the experimental method of giving REBT for five sessions to twelve female prisoners by using the measurement Rosenberg self-esteem scale (RSES). The results of the study showed an average increase in self-esteem research subjects before and after the intervention of rational emotive behavior therapy ($p < 0.05$). This research shows the potential of REBT to improve the mental health of female prisoners.

1. Introduction

In the context of the criminal justice system, female prisoners are a group that is vulnerable to various challenges, including problems of low self-esteem. Detention, isolation, stigmatization, and traumatizing experiences within the prison environment can contribute to a decrease in the self-esteem of female prisoners. Therefore, a holistic and effective approach is needed to help increase their self-esteem, one of which is through rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT). Rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) is one of the well-known and effective cognitive therapy approaches in dealing with various emotional and behavioral problems. Developed by psychologist Albert Ellis in 1955, REBT has a philosophical foundation that connects one's thoughts, emotions, and behavior. This approach focuses on the relationship between

irrational thoughts and the emergence of negative emotions and unproductive behavior.¹⁻³

The main foundation of REBT is the belief that it is not external situations or events that directly produce one's emotions and behavior but rather the subjective interpretation formed by the individual's mind of the situation. In the context of female prisoners, this concept is especially relevant because the prison environment and the experience of detention can trigger a variety of emotions, such as hopelessness, guilt, or low self-esteem. REBT seeks to help female prisoners recognize any irrational thought patterns they may have and replace them with more rational and adaptive thoughts. REBT teaches skills to identify harmful irrational thoughts, such as overgeneralization, absolute thinking, and self-judgmentalism. After these thoughts are identified, the

client is invited to evaluate the truth and logic of these thoughts. Furthermore, clients are taught to change irrational thought patterns into more realistic, flexible, and positive thoughts.⁴⁻⁶

The application of REBT in prison settings and among female prisoners has significant potential in overcoming self-esteem challenges. By recognizing and eliminating negative thoughts, female prisoners can reduce stress and anxiety levels and build a more stable foundation of self-esteem. They can understand that even if they are in a difficult situation, they still have some control over how they respond to the situation through a more sound mind. REBT can be a powerful tool in helping them overcome self-esteem challenges that may arise during periods of detention and rehabilitation. By helping female prisoners to identify and replace self-deprecating irrational thoughts, REBT can help them build a more positive and stronger view of themselves. In addition, REBT can also help female prisoners develop problem-solving skills, overcome feelings of shame and guilt, and strengthen their ability to deal with stress and frustration. Through the REBT therapy process, female prisoners can learn to formulate a more balanced and realistic self-view, as well as develop a sense of self-esteem without neglecting responsibility for the actions taken. As such, REBT has great potential in helping female prisoners build a solid foundation of self-esteem, increase self-confidence, and form a more positive psychological foundation for their journey of rehabilitation and reintegration into society.⁷⁻¹⁰ This study aimed to determine the role of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in increasing the self-esteem of female prisoners.

2. Methods

This study is an experimental study with a pre-post test design approach. A total of 12 research subjects were included in this study. The research subjects were female prisoners at class IIB Gianyar Detention Center, Bali, Indonesia, who were in the middle adult phase with an age range of 38-65 years and had low self-esteem assessment scores (by measuring

Rosenberg self-esteem scale, research subjects with self-worth low are those who obtain a score in the 10-25 interval range and category self-worth high is at a score of 26-40) and expressed willingness to follow REBT voluntarily.

The REBT intervention was carried out in four meeting sessions over 3 weeks. The material presented in the first session is part of the beginning stage of REBT, whose activities emphasize building therapeutic relationships between researchers and experimental participants. At this stage, the researcher builds cognitive, emotional, and behavioral relationships with the subject through the ABC framework. The second and third sessions are entering the middle stage. Subject get educated about self-worth and irrational beliefs. During this stage, subjects are given systematic assignments and deepening of the types and dynamics of irrational beliefs. During the second and third stages of the process, the researcher motivates the subject and builds a commitment to change (during the implementation of therapy or assignments outside the therapy session). The fourth session is the ending stage. This session is the final stage in REBT activities. The researcher conducted a review of the subject's progress during the session and reviewed feedback from participants about changes and insight obtained during the therapy session. In this final part, reinforcement is given to the subject to maintain more rational thoughts and behavior and to use the skills acquired during therapy in everyday life. Analysis of self-esteem assessment scores with RSES assessed before and after the REBT intervention. Data were analyzed univariate and bivariate using SPSS software version 26.

3. Results and Discussion

The general description of the characteristics of the subjects in this experimental study is illustrated in Table 1. In the religious aspect, the subject adhered to the Hindu religion, the most dominant in this experimental group (n = 8 people). This condition is understandable because the detention center is

located in the province of Bali, where the majority of the population is Hindu. While the subjects are Muslim, as much as 25 percent. Most of the experimental subjects had a senior high school education background or equivalent (83.3 percent), aged 38-46 years (mean = 41.42). Half of the twelve

subjects in this study were women who were still married (n = 6 people). Half of the subjects were involved in embezzlement and drug crimes (50 percent). Other subject cases are fraud and domestic violence.

Table 1. Characteristics of research subjects.

Characteristics	N=12	Percentage (%)
Religion		
Hindu	8	66,7
Islam	3	25,0
Christian protestant	1	8,3
Education		
Senior high school	10	83.3
Bachelor degree	2	16,7
Marital status		
Unmarried	3	25.0
Married	6	50.0
Divorced/Widowed	3	25,0

After four sessions of REBT intervention, a self-esteem assessment was conducted pretest and post-test. Statistical test using paired samples T-test as a method for measuring the effectiveness of a form of treatment given based on the difference in the average before and after being given REBT. Based on this test, there are differences in scores for each subject, as

shown in Table 2. Differences mean self-esteem before treatment (mean 20,83) and after treatment (mean 32.75). The difference is 11.92 ($p < 0.000$), t count 0.236 < t table 1.79588 at 0.05 significance. The test results concluded that there was a significant difference in the level of self-esteem of female prisoners when compared before and after the administration of REBT.

Table 2. Measurement results in self-esteem before and after intervention REBT.

Subject	Pre-test	Category	Post-test	Category
Bj	16	Low	26	High
Boc	23	Low	37	High
Kom	20	Low	36	High
Md	23	Low	35	High
Nk	22	Low	37	High
Mia	25	Low	27	High
Pld	16	Low	32	High
Gus	25	Low	37	High
Im	20	Low	35	High
Des	20	Low	33	High
Nlk	20	Low	30	High
Aswd	20	Low	28	High

REBT given to female prisoners can provide an understanding of the importance of changing or reducing the frequency of irrational or negative thoughts, such as thoughts of feeling worthless, inadequate, isolated from family and friends, and

unable to accept oneself as a prisoner. In individuals with normal levels of self-esteem, role identity (the process of self-verification) produces behavior that results in a match between self-relevant meanings in situations and the meanings and expectations

embodied in identity standards. Individuals with high self-esteem perceive feedback as consistent with their positive self-view, whereas individuals with low self-esteem discredit the source of the feedback and counteract negativity. Female prisoners with low self-esteem consider themselves to have bad luck, are worthless in the eyes of their family and society, and are unable to do anything for those closest to them because they are in prison.¹¹⁻¹⁵

Intervention REBT in research helps the subject change the habit of thinking and behavior to be more logical and adaptive. Giving role play, humor, cognitive homework, or homework assignment to the subject during the therapy session can improve, get used to, and internalize a value system that is more rational in dealing with the current situation outside the therapy session. Subjects can also express negative feelings that have been arranged in such a way that other participants can then provide solutions to respond more rationally to unpleasant situations. The increase in the self-esteem of female prisoners in this study is evidenced by the emergence of a feeling of satisfaction with all the current conditions, seeing myself as better and more useful, being able to carry out the same activities as most other inmates, and accepting myself well as a prisoner.¹⁶⁻²⁰

4. Conclusion

REBT interventions can significantly increase the self-esteem of female prisoners, where subjects feel they have better self-confidence and self-efficacy, are able to perceive themselves with more positive appreciation and acceptance, and are able to overcome social anxiety in the detention environment.

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