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Implementation of rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT) in handling negative student behavior

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ABSTRACT

Negative behavior among secondary school students is a problem that is still frequently found in educational environments and has a significant impact on the learning process as well as students' social-emotional development. These behaviors include rule violations, lack of discipline, low academic responsibility, and aggressive actions toward peers and teachers. This problem is influenced not only by environmental factors but also by internal factors, particularly students' irrational thinking patterns in interpreting events. This article aims to examine in depth the application of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in addressing negative behavior among secondary school students. The method used is a literature study by reviewing various relevant books and scientific journals. The results of the study show that negative behavior is often rooted in students' irrational beliefs about certain events. Through the disputing technique in REBT, students are helped to challenge these beliefs and replace them with more rational, logical, and realistic thinking patterns. This change in thinking patterns leads to more adaptive and constructive behavioral changes in daily life. Thus, REBT can be an effective approach in school guidance and counseling services.



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Introduction

Negative behavior among secondary school students is a complex phenomenon that cannot be separated from the developmental dynamics of adolescence, a period characterized by the search for identity. In daily educational practice, various behaviors such as truancy, violation of school rules, lack of discipline, failure to complete assignments, and even aggressive attitudes toward peers and teachers are still frequently found (Santrock, 2018). These behaviors not only affect students' academic achievement but also influence classroom atmosphere, peer relationships, and the quality of interaction between students and teachers (Steinberg, 2014).

Furthermore, negative behavior among students is often an indicator of deeper psychological problems. Students who display such behaviors may be experiencing emotional pressure, internal conflict, or difficulties in self-regulation. If this condition is not addressed properly, it may have a long-term impact on personality development, including the formation of maladaptive behavior patterns (Hurlock, 2011; Lochman & Matthys, 2017).

The development of adolescent behavior is strongly influenced by the social environment, including family, school, and peer groups. An unfavorable environment can worsen students' psychological conditions and trigger negative behavior. In addition, the interaction between personal factors, environment, and learning experiences also shapes individual behavior (Bandura, 1997). In developmental terms, adolescence is a period characterized by increased emotional sensitivity, making individuals more prone to stress and pressure (Steinberg, 2014).

However, another important factor influencing student behavior is the way individuals think in interpreting events. Students with irrational thinking patterns tend to interpret situations excessively and unobjectively. For example, when receiving a low grade, a student may immediately conclude that they are incapable or lack potential for success. Such thinking patterns then trigger negative emotions that are expressed through maladaptive behavior. This is in line with the view that individual beliefs play an important role in determining emotional and behavioral responses (Ellis, 2001; David et al., 2010).

In this context, counseling approaches that focus on changing thinking patterns become highly relevant. One such approach is Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) developed by Albert Ellis. This approach emphasizes that individuals' emotions and behaviors are strongly influenced by their beliefs about events, making cognitive change the key element in addressing behavioral problems (Ellis & Dryden, 1997; Corey, 2017). In addition, the unstable psychological condition of adolescents makes them vulnerable to cognitive distortions that can trigger maladaptive behavior in daily life (Beck, 2011).

Results and Discussions

Negative Behavior in Student

Negative behavior refers to all forms of student actions that are not in accordance with the norms, rules, or expectations that apply in the school environment (Woolfolk, 2016). These behaviors may include truancy, failure to complete assignments, speaking rudely, violating school rules, and showing aggressive attitudes toward peers or teachers. Such behaviors not only affect the learning process but also disrupt classroom atmosphere and student social relationships. In the long term, negative behavior can hinder personality development and character formation. Adolescent behavior is strongly influenced by social norms and the developmental environment (Santrock, 2018). This is supported by findings that social interaction has a major influence on adolescent behavior formation (Steinberg, 2014).

The emergence of negative behavior in students cannot be separated from various interrelated factors. Internal factors include unstable emotional conditions, low self-control ability, and irrational thinking patterns (McLeod, 2013). Students with extreme thinking patterns, such as always striving for perfection or excessive fear of failure, tend to experience pressure more easily, which is then manifested in negative behavior. Meanwhile, external factors include an unsupportive family environment, peer influence, and academic pressure from school. Individual behavior is formed through the interaction of personal factors, environment, and learning experiences (Bandura, 1997). Developmental psychology research also shows that maladaptive behavior in adolescents is the result of a complex interaction between cognitive, emotional, and social environmental factors (Lochman & Matthys, 2017).

Students who show negative behavior generally have certain characteristics, such as lack of discipline, irritability, difficulty accepting criticism, and low responsibility for academic tasks. In addition, students tend to have low learning motivation and poor emotional regulation. This condition often occurs during adolescence because this stage involves a process of identity formation accompanied by significant emotional changes (Hurlock, 2011). Inability to manage these changes can trigger maladaptive behavior. Adolescence is also known as a period that is vulnerable to emotional and behavioral instability (Steinberg, 2014).

In addition to these factors, negative behavior is also often related to how students interpret events. Students with negative thinking tendencies are more likely to interpret situations excessively, leading to disproportionate reactions. For example, when receiving a reprimand from a teacher, a student may assume that they are disliked and respond with defiance. This shows that cognitive aspects play an important role in the emergence of negative behavior. Cognitive theory explains that individuals' interpretation of events determines their emotional and behavioral responses (Ellis, 2001; David et al., 2010).

In the current educational context, negative behavior is also influenced by technological development and social media. Students are more easily exposed to various information that may not align with educational values. This can influence students' thinking patterns and behavior, especially if not balanced with adequate digital literacy skills. Therefore, counseling approaches that address cognitive aspects are increasingly important to help students filter information and develop healthy thinking patterns. Cognitive approaches such as Rational

Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) have been proven effective in helping individuals change irrational thinking patterns into more adaptive ones in facing modern challenges (Corey, 2017; Dryden, 2012).

Basic Concepts of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is a counseling approach that emphasizes that individuals' emotions and behaviors are strongly influenced by their thinking patterns or beliefs about an event (Ellis, 1994). Ellis (2001) stated that "people are not disturbed by events, but by the views which they take of them." This statement emphasizes that emotional disturbance does not arise from the event itself, but from the individual's interpretation of the event. In the context of students, differences in thinking patterns lead to different reactions to the same situation. This shows that cognitive aspects play a central role in determining emotional and behavioral responses (Corey, 2017; David et al., 2010).

In REBT, there is the ABC model which explains the relationship between events, beliefs, and consequences. Activating Event (A) refers to the event experienced by an individual, Belief (B) refers to the belief or interpretation of that event, and Consequence (C) refers to the emotional and behavioral responses that arise. This model emphasizes that it is not the event that determines an individual's response, but how the individual interprets it (Ellis, 2001). The ABC model also helps make the counseling process more structured in identifying the sources of students' psychological problems. By understanding this relationship, students can realize that changes in beliefs directly influence emotions and behavior (Dryden, 2012; DiGiuseppe et al., 2014).

Irrational beliefs in REBT are usually in the form of excessive demands, such as the necessity to always succeed, the need to always be liked, or the inability to accept failure. These beliefs are rigid, unrealistic, and inflexible. This condition makes individuals easily experience emotional distress when reality does not match their expectations. In the context of students, irrational beliefs may appear in thoughts such as "I must always be perfect" or "if I fail, it means I am worthless." This can hinder students' psychological development because it generates excessive negative emotions (Szentagotai & Jones, 2010; Hyland et al., 2014).

The main goal of REBT is to help individuals identify irrational beliefs, challenge them critically, and replace them with more rational beliefs. This process does not only focus on changing thinking patterns but also on changing accompanying emotions and behaviors. In counseling practice, counselors help students identify irrational thought patterns, evaluate their validity, and guide them toward more realistic and adaptive thinking. In this way, students can develop healthier and more constructive thinking patterns (Ellis & Dryden, 1997; Corey, 2017).

REBT emphasizes the importance of practice and repetition so that rational thinking patterns can become habits. Cognitive change requires an ongoing process, not an instant transformation. Therefore, students need to be trained to apply rational thinking in daily life through self-reflection, thought recording, and discussions with counselors. Consistent practice will strengthen rational thinking patterns and gradually replace irrational ones, leading to improved emotional regulation and more adaptive behavior (Neenan & Dryden, 2000).

REBT also emphasizes that individuals play an active role in their own change process. Students are positioned as subjects capable of changing their own thinking patterns, not merely recipients of intervention. This approach encourages self-awareness and personal responsibility in the change process. Thus, the changes that occur become more meaningful, deeper, and longer-lasting because they originate from the individual's internal awareness (Dryden, 2009).

REBT does not only focus on reducing problems but also on developing individual potential. Through more rational thinking patterns, students are not only able to overcome problems but also improve self-confidence, decision-making abilities, and skills in facing life challenges. This makes REBT a comprehensive approach in supporting individuals' psychological well-being (David et al., 2010; Turner, 2016).

Application of REBT in Overcoming Negative Behavior

The initial stage in the application of REBT is conducting an assessment to identify the forms of students' negative behavior and the factors underlying it (Beck, 2011). At this stage, counselors do not only focus on observable behavior but also seek to understand students' psychological conditions more deeply, including family background, social interactions, and previous learning experiences. A comprehensive assessment allows counselors to understand the relationship between events, beliefs, and consequences experienced by students, so that interventions become more targeted and not merely symptomatic (Corey, 2017; DiGiuseppe et al., 2014).

After the assessment is carried out, the next stage is helping students recognize the irrational beliefs underlying their behavior. Many students are not aware that their way of thinking is irrational and can worsen their emotional condition. For example, failure in exams is often interpreted as evidence of personal incompetence. Such beliefs are absolute and not based on objective facts. Therefore, counselors help students

identify these thought patterns so that students understand that the main problem does not only come from events, but also from how they interpret them (Ellis, 2001; David et al., 2010).

The next stage is disputing, which is the process of challenging irrational beliefs through logical, empirical, and pragmatic approaches. Counselors invite students to question the validity of their beliefs through reflective questions, such as whether the belief is objectively true, whether there is supporting evidence, and whether such thinking is useful. This process not only aims to change beliefs but also trains critical and rational thinking skills in dealing with problems (Corey, 2017; Dryden, 2012).

After irrational beliefs are successfully challenged, students are guided to develop new, more rational and adaptive beliefs. Rational beliefs are flexible and realistic, for example changing “I must always succeed” into “I want to succeed, but failure is part of the learning process.” This change helps reduce emotional pressure and improves students’ adaptability. This process requires continuous practice and reinforcement so that the change can be maintained (Ellis & Dryden, 1997; Neenan & Dryden, 2000).

The next stage is application in daily life. Students are encouraged to practice rational thinking in various real-life situations, both at school and outside school. Counselors can assign tasks such as recording situations that trigger negative emotions, identifying the beliefs that arise, and replacing them with rational thoughts. This practice helps students actively internalize the change and increases awareness of their thinking processes (David et al., 2010; Dryden, 2009). Cognitive-behavioral approaches such as REBT have been proven effective in both clinical and educational interventions for handling maladaptive behavior problems (Kazantzis et al., 2010).

The final stage is evaluation and follow-up. Counselors assess changes in students’ cognitive, emotional, and behavioral aspects to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. In addition, reinforcement of positive changes is necessary to keep students motivated to maintain adaptive behavior. Regular monitoring is also required to ensure that the changes are stable and sustainable (Corey, 2017).

In practice, REBT can be combined with other techniques such as role playing, modeling, and reinforcement to strengthen the change process. This integrative approach increases the effectiveness of counseling services because students not only understand the concepts but are also able to apply them in real life. Research shows that a combination of techniques in cognitive-behavioral approaches produces more effective results in addressing maladaptive behavior (Gonzalez & Nelson, 2004; Turner, 2016).

Relevance of REBT in Modern Counseling Practice

REBT has high flexibility, allowing it to be applied in various counseling settings, including individual, group, and classroom guidance. This flexibility enables counselors to adjust the approach according to the diverse characteristics and needs of students, making the services provided more effective. This flexibility is also one of the main strengths of cognitive-behavioral approaches in modern counseling practice (Corey, 2017; Dryden, 2012).

In the digital era, REBT can also be combined with technology, such as online counseling or e-counseling. The use of technology allows counseling services to become more accessible to students, especially those who have time limitations or feel less comfortable with face-to-face counseling. Thus, the reach of services becomes broader and more inclusive. Research shows that cognitive-based interventions delivered online remain effective in helping individuals manage emotions and behavior (Andersson, 2016; Richards & Richardson, 2012).

REBT is highly relevant to the needs of modern counselors because it provides a practical, applicable, and problem-solving-oriented approach. This approach not only helps students understand the problems they face but also provides concrete skills to handle them independently (David et al., 2018). In the context of modern education, REBT supports the development of students’ critical and reflective thinking skills. Students are encouraged to understand the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behavior so they can make more rational decisions in various life situations. This ability is an important part of 21st-century competencies (Warren, 2013).

REBT is also aligned with the demands of 21st-century education, which emphasizes the development of soft skills such as critical thinking, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills. This approach helps students become more adaptive and resilient in facing changes (Neenan & Dryden, 2000; Turner, 2016). In addition, REBT is effective in addressing various psychological problems in students, such as academic stress, anxiety, social pressure, and adjustment difficulties. This cognitive-based approach helps improve students’ mental resilience and psychological well-being (David et al., 2010; Hyland et al., 2014).

Practice Implication of REBT Implementation in School Guidance and Counseling Services

The implementation of REBT in school guidance and counseling services has broad practical implications, particularly in improving the effectiveness of interventions for students who display negative

behavior (Hofmann et al., 2012). Counselors do not only act as providers of assistance but also as facilitators who help students understand the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behavior. By using the REBT approach, counselors can systematically guide students to identify the true source of problems, namely irrational thinking patterns. This makes the counseling process more focused and not merely centered on observable symptoms (Ellis, 2001; Corey, 2017).

In practice, REBT can be integrated into various types of counseling services, including individual, group, and classroom guidance services. In individual counseling, counselors can more intensively help students explore their irrational beliefs and carry out deeper disputing processes. Meanwhile, in group counseling, students can learn from each other's experiences and develop rational thinking skills through discussion and social interaction. In classroom guidance, REBT can be used as a psychoeducational approach to equip students with basic skills in managing thoughts and emotions from an early stage (Dryden, 2012; DiGiuseppe et al., 2014). Another practical implication is the need to improve counselors' competencies in understanding and applying REBT techniques appropriately. Counselors need to have the ability to identify irrational thought patterns, ask challenging yet empathetic questions, and guide students in developing more rational thinking patterns. In addition, counselors must also be able to adjust the approach to students' characteristics so that the intervention is well received and does not cause resistance (Corey, 2017; Dryden, 2009).

The implementation of REBT also requires collaboration between counselors, teachers, and parents. A supportive school environment is essential so that changes in students can be maintained. Teachers can play a role in reinforcing positive behavior shown by students in the classroom, while parents can help create a home environment that supports the development of healthy thinking patterns. With good cooperation among these parties, the effectiveness of REBT implementation can increase significantly (Santrock, 2018; Steinberg, 2014). In addition, REBT can also be used as a preventive approach in guidance and counseling services. Counselors can provide training or psychoeducational programs to students regarding rational thinking, emotional regulation, and problem-solving skills. In this way, students are not only assisted when problems arise but are also equipped with the ability to prevent future problems (Neenan & Dryden, 2000; Turner, 2016).

In the long term, the implementation of REBT in schools can contribute to the development of stronger, more independent, and more resilient student character. Students who are able to think rationally will be better able to handle pressure, make appropriate decisions, and build healthy social relationships. This is in line with the goals of education, which not only focus on academic aspects but also on the overall development of students' personality and life skills (David et al., 2018; Hyland et al., 2014).

Conclusions

Student negative behavior is a complex problem influenced by various internal and external factors. One of the main contributing factors is irrational thinking patterns in interpreting events. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is an effective approach to address this issue because it focuses on changing cognitive aspects as the root of emotions and behavior. Through systematic stages, starting from assessment to evaluation, REBT helps students recognize, challenge, and change irrational beliefs into more rational ones. This change not only reduces negative behavior but also improves students' ability to manage emotions and respond to various situations in a more adaptive way. Based on these findings, it is recommended that school counselors implement the REBT approach more optimally in guidance and counseling services. In addition, further research is needed to examine the effectiveness of REBT in different contexts and among various student populations.

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