

Implementation of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy in Children with Emotional Disorders in Pakpak Bharat

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Abstract; *This study aims to describe the use of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) on a child experiencing emotional disturbances following the death of her mother. Healthy psychological development in children plays a crucial role in their ability to learn and adapt. Good cognitive and emotional development enables children to understand and manage their emotions, communicate effectively, and build positive social relationships. A child with strong emotional skills tends to be more resilient, better able to cope with stress, and has a higher level of life satisfaction. This study employs a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of individual experiences within a specific context. Observations and interviews were conducted with the subject, a 10-year-old girl named Icha, who was identified as having emotional and behavioral issues suitable for REBT intervention. Romans 12:2 provides relevant spiritual guidance in the context of children's psychological development, emphasizing the importance of transforming the mind for a better life. Through the stages of REBT, Icha successfully identified and changed the irrational thoughts that caused her emotional disturbances. Significant changes were observed in the fourth session, where Icha became calmer and was able to accept herself. This therapy demonstrates the effectiveness of REBT in addressing emotional disorders in children, especially those experiencing trauma from loss.*

Keywords: *Emotional Disorders; Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy; Children*

Introduction

Ensuring the psychological development of children is of utmost importance as this stage forms the foundation of their personality and character. During childhood, children develop an understanding of themselves and the world around them, which influences how they interact with others and face life's challenges. Psychosocial development stages, as proposed by experts, indicate that children who successfully navigate each developmental stage in a healthy manner will have a strong foundation for self-confidence, autonomy, initiative, and the ability to collaborate with others.

Moreover, healthy psychological development in children is crucial for their ability to learn and adapt. Good cognitive and emotional development enables children to understand and manage their emotions, communicate effectively, and build positive social relationships. A child with good emotional skills tends to be more resilient, better able to handle stress, and has a higher level of life satisfaction. This is essential for their academic performance as well as overall well-being.

External factors such as family, school, and social environment significantly influence a child's psychological development. Support from a family that provides love,

stability, and clear boundaries can create a safe and nurturing environment for children to grow and thrive. Interaction with peers at school also helps children learn social skills, cooperation, and conflict resolution. Thus, attention to a child's psychological development is a crucial investment in creating a healthy, happy, and productive future generation.

During a preliminary observation in Pakpak Bharat, a 10-year-old child was identified as potentially experiencing psychological developmental issues. These issues can be mitigated through a cognitive therapy called Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). This is crucial for the child, as the Word of God teaches that followers of Christ should strive to be exceptional individuals. "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2). Growing into an individual pleasing to God should be the aim of a child's psychological development, and when issues arise, efforts should be made to rectify them.

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is a cognitive therapy approach developed by Albert Ellis (Dryden, 2005). This therapy aims to help individuals identify and change irrational thoughts that cause emotional disturbances and maladaptive behaviors. This study aims to describe the use of REBT in a child experiencing emotional disturbances following the death of her mother. The study is expected to provide insights into how REBT can be effectively applied to a 10-year-old child and to understand the changes that occur in the child's thinking, emotions, and behavior. The results are expected to improve cognitive-behavioral therapy approaches for children with emotional and behavioral issues (David, Cotet, Matu, Mogoase, & Stefan, 2018).

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of individual experiences within a specific context. Observations and interviews were conducted with the subject, a 10-year-old girl named Icha, who has been identified as having emotional and behavioral issues suitable for REBT intervention. At the time of the study, Icha was the fourth of four siblings and reported being in the fourth grade. Two of her older siblings were married, and one was in high school. Icha lived with her uncle (her father's brother) because her mother had passed away and her father worked irregular jobs at construction sites.

The study aims to answer two fundamental questions:

1. How does the implementation of REBT affect the child's thoughts, emotions, and behavior?
2. What are the challenges and successes encountered during the application of REBT to a 10-year-old child?

The inclusion criteria for this study were: children who can communicate well, are willing to participate in therapy, and have parental/guardian consent. The exclusion criteria were: children with severe developmental disorders or significant medical issues.

The data collection procedure was conducted in several stages:

1. In-depth Interviews: Conducted with the child, parents, and therapist before, during, and after the intervention. The interviews aimed to explore perceptions, experiences, and perceived changes.
2. Participant Observation: The therapist recorded interactions and changes during the REBT therapy sessions.
3. Documentation: Therapy records and daily journals maintained by the child to document thoughts, feelings, and daily behaviors.

Data obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation were analyzed using thematic analysis method. The steps of thematic analysis include data coding, theme identification, and interpretation of results to understand the experiences and changes that occur during the implementation of REBT.

This research adheres to research ethics: obtaining written consent from parents or guardians, maintaining data confidentiality and participant identities, and providing children with the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

Results and Discussion

The therapy was conducted over several sessions using the REBT approach. Each session had specific goals to help Icha identify, evaluate, and change her irrational thoughts. The following is a simulation of the therapy stages from the first meeting to the fourth meeting (Voltan Acar & Şahin, 2019).

1. First Meeting

Goal: Identifying issues and building a therapeutic relationship.

a. Introduction

- 1) Therapy began by building trust. The therapist introduced themselves and created a comfortable atmosphere for Icha.
- 2) The therapist listened to Icha's story about losing her parents without passing judgment.

b. Problem Identification

- 1) The therapist observed Icha's behavior of being unwilling to learn and often desiring her friend's belongings.
- 2) Through discussion, the therapist attempted to understand Icha's feelings about living with her grandparents and the feelings of anxiety and loss she experienced.

c. Therapy Explanation

The therapist explained the goals of REBT therapy to Icha and how this therapy would help change her thoughts and feelings.



Fig.1. Therapist and Icha at the Initial Stage

2. Second Session

Objective: Identifying irrational thoughts and initiating the process of forming rational thoughts.

a. Discussion of Irrational Thoughts

- 1) The therapist assists Icha in identifying irrational thoughts, such as "I must have everything my friends have to be liked by them" or "I can't be happy without my parents."
- 2) The therapist teaches Icha to recognize these thoughts when they arise.

b. Introduction to the ABC Model

The therapist introduces the ABC model (Activating event, Belief, Consequence) to help Icha understand how her thoughts influence her feelings and behaviors. Example: A (a friend has a new toy), B (I must have that toy too), C (feeling anxious and angry).

3. Third Session

Objective: Evaluating and challenging irrational thoughts.

a. Evaluation of Thoughts

- 1) The therapist prompts Icha to evaluate the truth of her irrational thoughts. For example, "Is it true that all your friends will only like you if you have their toys? What about God, does God approve of that?"
- 2) Through Socratic dialogue, the therapist helps Icha realize that her thoughts are not always true and helpful.

b. Formation of Rational Thoughts

The therapist assists Icha in forming rational thoughts, such as "My friends will still like me even if I don't have everything they have" or "I can still be happy even though my mother is no longer here, because I have siblings who care about me, especially I have God."

4. Fourth Session

Objective: Reinforcing rational thoughts and practicing new skills.

a. Reinforcement of Rational Thoughts

The therapist reiterates the rational thoughts formed in previous sessions and reinforces them through real-life examples in Icha's daily life.

b. Practice and Evaluation

1. Icha is encouraged to practice rational thoughts in real-life situations. For example, when seeing a friend have something new, Icha is encouraged to remind herself that she doesn't need to have the same thing to be happy or accepted.
2. The therapist provides positive feedback on Icha's changes in behavior and feelings.

c. Assessment of Progress

1. Icha shows significant changes; she is calmer and more accepting of herself. She no longer feels she needs to have everything her friends have to feel happy.
2. Icha begins to show interest in learning and interacts more positively with her friends.



Fig 2. Therapist and Icha at the Final Stage

The psychological development of children is a crucial aspect that influences their overall well-being. Mental health encompasses the ability to manage emotions, build healthy relationships, and develop cognitive and social skills. Romans 12:2 provides relevant spiritual guidance in the context of children's psychological development by emphasizing the importance of transforming the mind for a better life (Snyman, 2016).

Romans 12:2 states, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will." This verse underscores the significance of mind transformation and renewal as the foundation for understanding and living life according to God's will. In the context of children's psychological development, this mind renewal can be interpreted as the process of educating and guiding children to develop healthy, rational, and positive thinking.

The renewal of the mind as outlined in Romans 12:2 encourages children to think critically and rationally. In the psychological context, the ability to discern between right and wrong,

as well as understanding the consequences of their actions, is key to developing healthy thinking. Children who are guided to think rationally will be better equipped to cope with emotional and social challenges in constructive ways (Spangenberg, 2013).

The process of mind renewal helps children build a strong sense of identity and morality. Clear identity and strong moral values provide children with a stable foundation for psychological development. Children who have a good understanding of themselves and the values they hold will be more resilient in facing pressures from their environment and peer influence.

The mind renewal taught through Romans 12:2 is also related to the development of emotional resilience. Children who learn to renew their minds in positive ways will be better able to manage stress, anxiety, and depression. They will have better strategies for dealing with negative emotions and maintaining their mental well-being (Blomberg, 2020).

To implement the principles of Romans 12:2 in the psychological development of children, education and upbringing should encompass:

1. Teaching strong moral values and ethics, and encouraging children to think critically about their choices.
2. Utilizing techniques that help children recognize and transform irrational or negative thoughts into positive and adaptive ones.
3. Providing a supportive environment where children feel safe to express their feelings and receive the necessary guidance to navigate emotional challenges.

The theoretical foundation based on Romans 12:2 emphasizes the importance of mind renewal as the core of healthy psychological development in children. Through mind renewal, children can develop critical and rational thinking, build strong identities and moralities, and enhance their emotional resilience. Implementing these principles in education and upbringing will help children grow into psychologically balanced individuals capable of leading a quality and meaningful life (Naibaho & Sitorus, 2023).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Through the stages of REBT therapy, Icha successfully identified and changed irrational thoughts causing her emotional disturbances. Significant changes were observed by the fourth session, where Icha became calmer and more accepting of herself. This therapy demonstrates the effectiveness of REBT in addressing emotional disturbances in children, especially those experiencing loss trauma.

This research highlights that the psychological development of children is crucial in shaping their personalities and characters. During childhood, children develop an understanding of themselves and the world around them, influencing their interactions with others and their ability to face life's challenges. Children who successfully navigate psychosocial developmental stages will have a strong foundation for confidence, autonomy, initiative, and cooperation.

The implementation of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) in a 10-year-old child, as applied to the research subject named Icha, shows significant results. REBT helped Icha identify and change irrational thoughts causing her emotional disturbances. Through several therapy sessions, positive changes occurred in Icha's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. These findings support that REBT can be an effective approach to address emotional problems in children.

In a spiritual context, Romans 12:2 emphasizes the importance of mind renewal for a better life in accordance with God's will. This principle is relevant in the psychological development of children because mind renewal helps children develop healthy, rational, and positive thinking. With mind renewal, children can build strong identities and moralities and enhance their emotional resilience.

From this research, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Educational institutions and families need to integrate strong moral values and ethics into curricula and daily upbringing. Programs that encourage children to think critically about their choices will aid in forming strong identities and moralities.
2. Mental health institutions and schools should consider using cognitive-behavioral techniques like REBT to help children overcome emotional and behavioral disturbances. Training for therapists and teachers in these techniques would be beneficial.
3. Society needs to provide greater support to families and children in creating safe and supportive environments. This includes providing space for children to express their feelings and receive necessary guidance to overcome emotional challenges.
4. Further research is needed to test the effectiveness of REBT in various age groups and social backgrounds. Additional case studies will help expand understanding of how this therapy can be tailored to meet the diverse needs of individual children.

By implementing these recommendations, it is hoped that the psychological development of children can be enhanced, leading them to become psychologically balanced individuals capable of living a quality and meaningful life and becoming individuals pleasing to God according to the principles of Romans 12:2.

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