



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGY AND COUNSELLING (IJEPC) www.ijepc.com



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR ADOLESCENT WITH BODY DISSATISFACTION, ANXIETY AND SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES.

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Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 10.08.2023 Revised date: 27.08.2023 Accepted date: 07.09.2023 Published date: 15.09.2023

To cite this document:

Terence, N., Ayub, N., & Kemong, P J. (2023). The Effectiveness Of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy For Adolescent With Body Dissatisfaction, Anxiety And Self-Esteem Issues. *International Journal* of Education, Psychology and Counseling, 8 (51), 244-254.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.851017

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Abstract:

Body image dissatisfaction or negative body image is closely related to psychological and cultural factors. The issue of body dissatisfaction becomes very important to university and college teenagers as well as adults, as this problem arises when they are too obsessed with weight satisfaction, weight anxiety and physical attraction. This issue can have a drastic impact on adolescent's anxiety and self-esteem, due to the fact that when their weight does not reach the desired level, they will experience disorders such as depression, lack of self -esteem and eating problems. In Malaysia, the issue of image dissatisfaction, anxiety and self-esteem is increasing every year. This is because nowadays teenagers are too obsessed and fixated with body image that it affects their health. In addition, some communities also consider that body size and weight should be ideal according to the wishes of the cultural culture so many children and adolescents choose to stay slim in order to be accepted by their peers. These problems of dissatisfaction, anxiety and self-esteem are formed from cognitive, perceptual and behavioral aspects. The cognitive aspect explains how an individual thinks about himself; the perceptual aspect is seen through how other individuals assess their bodies and the behavioral aspect is also how individuals treat their bodies as desired. Thus, using the cognitive behavioral therapy intervention module can help individuals to change their assumptions and beliefs about the problem of body image dissatisfaction.



Keywords:

Body Image Dissatisfaction, Anxiety, Self-Esteem, Adolescence, Cognitive Behavioral Counseling Intervention Module

Introduction

Adolescence stage or youth entering phase is considered as an interesting age because this is where they begin to get to know life that is filled with full of twists and turns. Any emotional stress, depression, anxiety or excessive fear will be felt at this stage. If not controlled or identified at an early stage it can lead to mental health problems. In fact, the ideal body shape and size is also every teenager's dream, this aspect will ensure that teenagers will strive to achieve these demands. For example, researchers on adolescents in Australia says 70-76 per cent of adolescents want and desire a thinner body than their body size (Victorian Government Department of Human Services, 2005). This is because teenagers these days are too fixated and obsessed with body image that affects their health. Moreover, several societies also assume that body size and weight should be ideal according to cultural demand as many children and adolescents choose to stay slim in order to be accepted by their peers (Lawler & Nixon, 2011). Therefore, adolescents who have negative perceptions will continue to feel anxious and lack in their self-esteem towards their body so they tend not to associate with others, and this can lead to distraction to the students' academic achievement.

Body Image Dissatisfaction

Body image dissatisfaction is characterized as a person's unfavorable attitude toward their own body as a result of a perceived gap between their actual and ideal images of themselves (Cash, 1990). Body image is the main part that reflects a person's appearance so the body shape can be seen and appreciated by themselves as well as others. Hence, body image is the first and most easily seen self-representation by others, so this aspect plays a very important role to some teenagers who want an ideal body shape. This statement was supported by Rahmania & Ika (2012), an act that shows that adolescents who have desires to be known and acceptable in social relationship are very concerned about their appearances especially among women who are often dissatisfied with their appearances and self-evaluation. According to data from Linardon (2020), 17% of Australian male children and adolescents and 25% of American male children and adolescents expressed concern about their bodies' muscularity and leanness. Regarding adult men, 15% of Australian men claim to overvalue their weight and physical appearance, and more than 85% of the men in a sample of French university students expressed dissatisfaction with their muscularity. On the other hand, about 80% of young adolescent females said they are afraid of being overweight. This body image dissatisfaction problem is formed due to cognitive, perceptual, and behavioral aspects of oneself. According to Dacey & Kenny (1997), this problem can be thought of as a single word, a syndrome, or a clinical disease. Where, individuals will often evaluate and compare themselves with others to disrupt their own emotions such as depression, anxiety, and lack of self-esteem. However, in certain cases these feelings prolonged until it brings unintended consequences such as suicide or more serious mental illness.

In this era, women and men are very anxious about body image because today's society is more concerned with beauty, especially on physical attractiveness so there are a handful of women who are so infatuated with themselves that has negative impact on thinking and psychology. There is research conducted in Surabaya on 100 teenage girls which resulted in 83% of them *Copyright* © *GLOBAL ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (M) SDN BHD - All rights reserved*



were dissatisfied with their appearance. In fact, there are also observations that state men reported to suffer from image dissatisfaction too, so they are willing to make significant changes in terms of their physical appearance. According to Grieve (2007), 22% of male adolescents will go to the gymnasium three or more times a week to get a muscular body and 53% strive to get a muscular physical appearance with the rest point out 83.7% of men prefer to have a muscular body shape and slim. Given that body image plays an important role, this issue is not surprising if some men experience body image dissatisfaction and even for married men, they will also experience sexual problems and decreased levels of satisfaction if they do not have an ideal body image (Friedman et al., 1999).

Now, the problem of image dissatisfaction among school and university students needs to be highlighted because researchers have proven in creating image dissatisfaction issue among adolescents, especially late adolescents. This can be proven by studies (Kalin et al., 2004; Kakeshita & Almeida, 2006) 87% of female adolescents and 72% of male adolescents with image dissatisfaction issues are willing to control their dietary intake and lifestyle changes. Inaccurate body image issues will have risks towards negative physical and physiological results (Brener et al., 2004) because these situations will influence a person's lifestyle including unhealthy eating panache and extreme weight control methods.

Anxiety

Anxiety can be detected when a person is constantly experiencing fear when faced with social situations. Anxiety traits are shown when an individual experiences anxiety to a negative assessment by another individual. This feeling exists as a result of fear of being judged negatively by others in social situations that lead to stress, sadness, and self-isolation. According to Hart et al. (2008), anxiety is associated with physical appearance where individuals will evaluate themselves negatively on their body image and appearance. In addition, 34% of adults stated they were showing signs of anxiety, and 35% said they were depressed. According to Lee (2013), depression and anxiety are linked to having a negative body image. In the anxiety disorders are defined as concern and fear associated with only several social situations and not most or all but anxiety disorders have not yet been specifically recognized. This form of anxiety is still considered very dangerous, as it can prevent a person from enjoying life to the fullest, meeting friends, or succeeding in his or her career. In fact, the term "anxiety attack" is also linked in the title of anxiety disorder. Anxiety is a persistent fear disorder of one or more social situations in which an individual is exposed to strangers or feels himself or herself and his or her appearance being judged by others.

Observational results found that there were studies on concerns about body image and appearance for adolescent boys and girls (Levinson & Rodebaugh, 2012), and women with eating disorders (Claes et al., 2012). The result of the study shows that there is a high reliability and validity in the appearance anxiety issue in adolescents, especially in women. However, there are also some major studies namely (Şahin et al., 2014), stating that adolescents with high levels of parental education have much lower social levels of appearance anxiety compared to adolescents with low levels of parental education. This shows that parents are also a factor that can cause adolescents to think negatively about their appearance. There are even the results of studies by Park et al., (2009); Ferguson et al., (2011) stated that among the factors relate to image dissatisfaction issue is parental influence factor. Parents' criticism of the weight and physical appearance of their children is an important factor in growing concerns about body image in adolescents. There are studies that state the role of parents on the emphasis of body



image on young girls and adolescents put psychological stress on their lives (Helfert & Warschburger, 2011). In fact, criticizing parents, especially mothers, for their daughters such as "large body size" causing their teenage daughters worried about their weight and even for their sons as they will often be reminded to exercise in order to have an ideal muscular body shape.

Next, according to Kowaliski et al. (2007) appearance anxiety has a relationship with the nature of self-esteem, when an individual's self-esteem is low then they assume that oneself is less to be liked and valued by others. This causes them to experience low levels of self-esteem. As most of us know, adolescence is the most challenging stage in an individual. During this process, adolescents will face personality-shaping changes, accept physical changes, separation from family, build rules and moral values, become contributing members of society, and choose a profession (Anderson et al., 2004). These changes can seriously be stressful if teens fail to increase high self-esteem, the effects they will experience are image dissatisfaction, anxiety, depression and eating disorders.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is a concept that greatly affects an individual's personality (Azizi et al., 2005). Without realizing it, an individual's self-esteem also fluctuates over a period based on the environment, family, friends and so on (Azizi et al., 2005). In general, self-esteem can be interpreted as an individual's ability to trust and convince him or herself to do something and it depends on their appearance, loud voice or clothing that can attract other people's attention (Neff, 2011). A person with high self-esteem does not depend on the acceptance of others. They do not care what others say but are confident and believe in themselves. Meanwhile, those with low self-esteem are more likely to be shy, worried, cheap, and like to be alone.

The problem of lack of self-esteem towards negative body image is also influenced by the mass media and peers. According to Park et al. (2009); Ferguson et al. (2011) both of these factors contribute to negative thoughts, behaviors and emotions to adolescents. Social activities and experiences of adolescents browsing social media networking sites have an effect on their selfesteem toward their body image especially for adolescents aged 11 to 18 years old (Ringrose, 2001 & Siibak, 2009). Physical appearance plays an important role in browsing activities on social media networks (Ringrose, 2001). Some social media networking sites require to upload their personal photos (Espinoza & Juvonen, 2011). Hereafter, there are 60% of teenagers uploading photos on their personal profiles while 46% of them view and observe other people's photos (Espinoza & Juvonen, 2011). Furthermore, adolescents will ensure that their photos have an attractive physical appearance before uploading their photos on their personal profiles (Siibak, 2009). In fact, it shows 56% of female adolescents and 31% of male adolescents among adolescents are concerned with physical appearance when uploading their photos on social media networks (Siibak, 2009). There are also these teenage girls who will edit their photos to get physical appearance satisfaction from themselves and they also want to receive positive comments about their appearance (Ringrose, 2011).

Furthermore, the problem of low self-esteem towards this body image dissatisfaction can also be influenced by peers. When they are too obsessed with evaluations or comments from others or peers it causes them to have a lack of self-confidence. Due to this, teens will often receive and respond to comments about their physical appearance. For example, teenagers will make a statement about the uploaded photo and then some people comment on their physical *Copyright* © *GLOBAL ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE (M) SDN BHD - All rights reserved*



appearance such as "you look fat in this picture". If there are peers who are visible to the comment will tell other peers thus will have a negative impact on themselves such as depression, stress, and lack of self-esteem (Clark & Tigemann, 2006). There are studies that show that adolescents who have negative body image such as obese, black, short and so on will be victims of peer bullying, this causes them to feel less confident in themselves (Abdollahi et al., 2016). This is because physical appearance will usually be one of the main focuses of peer criticizing and commenting, negative comments about the body will make it difficult for victims to live their lives. With this, the negative impact on body image can lead a person to the problem of dissatisfaction in themselves as individuals will tend to compare their own body image with the ideal body image depicted in their respective minds. In line with the statement (Bully & Elosua, 2011), comparisons between one's body image and the deal body image can raise dissatisfaction with one's body image. This is because society today can very concern with the appearance and physical attractiveness of men and women in line with socio-cultural theory (Keery et al., 2004; Grogan 2008).

Cognitive Behavioral Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) was pioneered by Aaron Beck in 1960 which has three basic principles namely (a) cognitive activity influences behavior, (b) cognitive activity can be monitored and changed, and (c) the desire to change behavior may influence cognitive changes (Cash, 2002). Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a psychosocial-oriented therapy that assumes that wrong thoughts cause wrong behaviors and negative emotions. This therapy is a form of psychotherapy that aims to change how people think (cognitive) and behave with the aim of making people better. Therefore, the treatment given will emphasize on the (cognitive) thought system in an effort to change behavior and emotional state. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) focuses on replacing negative forms of thinking and behavior by shaping positive (cognitive) thinking and behavior (Corey, 2013).

Moreover, cognitive behavioral therapy or CBT is one of the approaches used in treatment and rehabilitation programs for individuals with body image problems (Cash, 2012). CBT is a treatment program to change an individual's negative thinking by restructuring their cognitive. This approach teaches individuals how to adapt to situations or stimuli that may trigger them to behave aggressively (Tong & Farrington 2006). The implementation of cognitive behavioral treatment programs is very popular and has become one of the key components or technique in therapeutic rehabilitation treatment program to treat behavior in young people (Cash, 2012).

The cognitive behavioral approach also involves a structural psychoeducational model and as a whole emphasizes the role of homework, placing responsibility on clients assuming they are active in and out of sessions as well as using a variety of behavioral and cognitive strategies that bring about change. Among the features of the behavioral cognitive approach are: (*a*) Collaborative relationship between client and therapist; (*b*) Assume that psychological problems are caused by cognitive process disorder; (*c*) Focus on cognitive and behavioral change to produce affective change; and (*d*) Limited time usage and structural educational treatments to focus problems specifically (Corey, 2013). Thus, a cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) intervention approach can help clients increase their awareness on errors on thinking perception as well as producing effective behaviors comparable to their way of thinking.



Effectiveness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

The result of cognitive behavioral therapy treatment in group counselling greatly show an improvement on issues of image dissatisfaction, anxiety and self-esteem. This is because counselling or psychotherapy approaches are seen to be helpful in building self-confidence and ability to adapt by reducing anxiety and self-esteem among students (Velayudhan, Gayatridevi & Rita Rani Bhattacharjee, 2010). Corey (2008) states, interventions in psychotherapy often use group counselling interventions (Corey, 2008). Heningsen and Heningsen (2004) also explained that group counselling interventions would be more successful because they could reduce discomfort to communicate and increase frequency to communicate. Therefore, group counselling using this behavioural cognitive intervention module is seen to be very appropriate in providing interventions to clients in dealing with the problems they face (Hortwitz, 2002).

Furthermore, according to Cornier (2009) using cognitive restructuring techniques in group counselling treatment can help individuals change their concept of an ideal body image. In fact, this cognitive restructuring technique is a technique done to stop the negative thoughts they have and help restructure the positive thoughts on their body image. In fact, there is also research that state cognitive-behavioural therapy is effective in managing negative body image issue in systematic desensitization technique. In this study 46 women were randomly selected into three treatment groups and three treatment groups. The treatment group underwent eight counselling sessions using systematic desensitization technique using mirrors. The result of this treatment showed that 38 (100%) respondents stated that this intervention was effective while the rest said that this intervention was a good "a great deal" (Bhatnagar, 2010). Systematic desensitization technique is also a technique that can help in treating individuals who have problems with body dissatisfaction. The systematic desensitization technique is a technique to reduce the perception of concern, fear or discomfort by carrying out treatment through activities that are contrary to the feelings experienced. This systematic desensitization technique is to eliminate or weaken the feeling of negative stimuli and form new stimuli i.e., pleasant stimuli or positive stimuli (Nanik & Gunawita, 2011).

In fact, there is a combined study between (Cash & Hrabosky, 2003), which states that a combination of psychoeducational and self-monitoring techniques can increase the level of body image satisfaction and reduce the problem of body image anxiety towards individuals. Using a combination of psycho-educational and self-monitoring techniques for six weeks of treatment, studies (Strachan & Cash, 2002) showed a positive effect on body image anxiety on two treatment groups namely one male treatment group and one female treatment group. The results showed that the level of image anxiety of the female treatment group and the male treatment group had decreased to 14% from 53%. Based on these observations, the researcher will conduct a cognitive behavioural group counselling session (CBGC) for six weeks using techniques that has high level of trust to the respondents to test the effectiveness of the technique.

In addition, (Chithambo & Huey, 2013) have developed an online behaviour cognitive program towards body that uses a body image workbook model (Cash, 1997). The study involved 271 women aged 15 to 26 years old and divided into six treatment groups and six control groups who had problems with weight anxiety, respondents underwent four online sessions involving several activities, such as recognizing alternative and rational interpretations on irrational thinking. The result showed the treatment group was supportive and able to be effective in reducing body dissatisfaction, eating pathology, internalization, and depression, among U.S.A



women (Mage = 20.9); in comparison to the control group (Chithambo & Huey, 2013). Ways to conduct online sessions has been widely practiced in western countries, but many researchers do not agree with the online treatment method because it does not give effectiveness level to its highest (Strachan & Cash, 2012).

In fact, Cognitive Behavioural Body Image can also reduce the symptoms of depression and eating disorders. Every improvement occurred without simultaneous changes in weight. This is supported by the study of Stice et al., (2003); Becker et al., (2006), cognitive behavioural approach has shown effectiveness in image dissatisfaction, anxiety and eating disorders among adolescent boys as well as women. With the existence of studies of Cognitive Behavioural approaches to negative body image among adolescents is enough to prove that adolescents are very concerned about their appearance. When they are too obsessed with stranger's assessments their health can be affected in parallel with the academic aspect. The study of Lim et al. (2000) found that as we grow older it makes individuals especially those in the aged of 17 to 27 years are more concerned with body image hence this can affect their BMI due to sedentary lifestyle and unhealthy eating patterns (Cecchini et al., 2010).

In addition, historical and proximal factors also play an important role in the development of negative body image influences, namely body image assessment and investment. Body image appraisal reflects an individual's beliefs and evaluations of satisfaction and dissatisfaction about their body while body image investment refers more to the cognitive, behavioural and emotional importance of a person's body in relation to their self-esteem. The study by (Molly & Monica, 2015) found that Cognitive Behavioural treatment affects respondents to improve their behaviours such as less evaluation or comparison attitude, less investment attitude and attitude from external factor influences. Respondents spend less on their appearance, increase self-esteem, less worried about being or becoming obese, and less confused from a variety of situational contexts. After undergoing six counselling sessions the analysis showed that 75% of the three treatment groups were less obese by appearance.

Based on the results from previous studies, it is clear that body image is very important for adolescents. This is because modern societies focus on body image and physical appearance have an impact on increasing dissatisfaction among adolescents towards their body image (Rosen et al., 2012). Upon entering the realm of adolescence, adolescents will begin to think for themselves, their relationships, and the world around them. For the first time, teenagers are starting to think about their lives and their image. Image perception is formed during adolescence is important because it will influence image perception in adulthood (Keating, 2004). In fact, the effects of puberty on adolescent's mental health vary between the sexes. Typically, female adolescents are at greater risk than male adolescents for developing a negative body image (Rosenblum, 1999).

It is well known that the problem of body image dissatisfaction can have a negative impact on adolescents especially in terms of aspects of self-esteem and serious anxiety. This issue can be seen from a review of studies conducted by (Kessler, 2003), where a review of past studies through the MEDLINE and PsycLIT databases stated that this problem will have a serious impact on a person's functionality and quality of life. With this, cognitive behavioural counselling treatment can help adolescents who face this problem. Individuals are able to restructure cognitively and modify behaviours that are effective to them so that they can live their daily lives like other people.



Conclusion

The problem of body image dissatisfaction or negative body image is due to cognitive and behavioural aspects where individuals are too concerned with physical appearance that it interferes with their daily lives. In Malaysia, studies on image dissatisfaction, anxiety and selfesteem are very limited compared to in the west. This phenomenon is rarely emphasized by society, especially families, as parents do not give moral support to children and even criticize their children' physical to the point of putting psychological pressure. According to Helfert & Warchburger (2011), this attitude will make them more inclined towards negativity and over time the negative attitude will affect their minds and will make them less productive and insecure towards themselves. The older we get, the more we feel dissatisfied with our body image especially during adolescence (Littleton & Ollendick, 2003). Therefore, the problem of body image dissatisfaction should be highlighted so that society is aware that the problem of body image dissatisfaction can disrupt the psychology of adolescents and adults such as extreme anxiety and low self-esteem. If we underestimate this issue, individuals can experience body dysmorphic disorders where they will act drastically on their body such as undergoing plastic surgery to satisfy themselves and public perception (Nurlita & Lisiswanti, 2016) even excessive or open bullying and cyber bullying needs to be emphasized by the authorities as this problem can disrupt the mental health of students (Grogan, 2008).

Acknowledgements

The author of this article would like to acknowledge and extended special gratitude to the Global Academic Excellence (M) Sdn Bhd, who granted the Publication Grant Scheme for this project. Special thanks to supervisor, Dr Norzihan Ayub, for guidance given during the completion of this project and her continuous support in providing brilliant comments and suggestions. Also, many appreciations to Faculty of Psychology and Education of Universiti Malaysia Sabah in support of resources for this project. Last but not the least, hundred of thanks to participants who agreed unconditionally participated in this project.

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