

The Effect of REBT Structured Group Counseling Towards the Psychology Aspects of Adolescents of Divorced Parent

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ABSTRACT

Parental divorce would greatly leave a significant impact to the psychological aspect of involved adolescents. Therefore, the aim of this quasi-experiment study is to measure the effect of REBT Structured Group Counseling to Grief (GRI), Anxiety (ANX), Stress (STR), and Depression (DEP) based on pre-test and post test scores of adolescents whose parents are divorced. Data is collected by using Divorced-Parents Adolescents Inventory which has a validity value of 0.78 and reliability value of 0.938. A total of 60 subjects (30 male subjects and 30 female subjects) are involved in this study in which they are divided into 6 groups (2 male groups, 2 female groups, and 2 control groups). Sets of data are analyzed by using mean, MANCOVA, and post hoc with significant level of 0.05. Result shows that the REBT Structured Group Counseling Module is effective in reducing the psychological variables namely grief, anxiety, stress, and depression. This study also shows that genders (male or female) and level of schooling do not have any effect on all variables that are studied. Thus, an early intervention for preventative measure is recommended to adolescents whose parents are divorced.

KEYWORDS: REBT structured group counseling module, adolescents of divorced parents and Divorced-Parents Adolescents Inventory.

INTRODUCTION

According to the minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim, divorce rate among married couples are getting serious in our country. A total of 38,000 divorce cases are reported in 2010, followed by 43,137 cases in 2011 and 47,779 cases in 2012 [4].

Although divorce is often seen as the final way out to settle conflict between couples, it is not the best option for children. Children and adolescents whose parents are divorced often have psychology problems and it affects their academic achievement. According to Wallerstein [28], divorce would leave a deep impact into the soul of the children; hence, causing depression and feeling of insecurity into their adulthood. Richardson & Mc

Cabe [24] found out that 20% to 25% out of a million children whose parents are divorced are negatively affected by the divorce.

Adolescents and children whose parents are divorced would have problems in their study and undergo psychology problems such as grief, depression, anxiety and stress throughout their life compared to others of non-divorce parents [5,2,13,16]. Besides, most studies indicate that parental divorce would result in long term negative impact involving psychology instability, interpersonal communication problem and decline in their academic achievement [6,11,28,18]. Other than that, Mohammad Nasir *et al* [20] also reported that these children and adolescents of divorced parents would have financial problem as most of them stay with their mother after the divorce.

The high level of psychology stress as a result of family affair, problems at school and negative social interaction would lead to high risk problems involving depression, anxiety, perverse behaviour and despair [23,25,27]. These are some of the early signal of the adolescents personal problem which might lead to serious behavioral problem in the future [8,13,17].

As such, the REBT Structured Group Counseling Module is designed in such a way as an early intervention to psychologically assist the divorced-parents adolescents, by focussing on preventative and development method, with hope that they could slowly adapt to the changes involved. The effect of the adaptation would then be analyzed quantitatively by using the scores of pre-test and post-test based on the psychology variables in this study such as grief, anxiety, stress and depression among adolescents of divorced parents.

The Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) was pioneered by Dr Albert Ellis since 1955 [10]. It was first started and developed from various behavioral-cognitive therapy approaches and until now, it has become one of the most popular therapy as well as the most cost and time effective approach. Moreover, REBT is also a comprehensive therapy approach, almost suitable for every case particularly when looking into a person's desire thoroughly, by focussing on present and also work as a recovery approach to enhance coping skill while facing problems in life [7].

According to Ellis [10], REBT divides life problems into two categories, namely i) Practical Problems which involve the outward factors, and ii) Emotional Problems which involve the inward feelings. The outward problems derive from interaction process between human and the environment, incidents experienced personally or witnessed from others, whereas the inward problems would be the emotional disorder which derive from an individual's perception towards the incident. The effect of emotional disorder would then affect the outward behavior.

Furthermore, Ellis also highlighted that our thoughts (cognitive) play a very important role in assessing every incident which has happened. The core of emotional disorder is based on irrational thinking [10]. Thus, the way a person think (rational or irrational) towards a past incident whether it is a personal experience or witness from others would affect behavior. Ellis [9] has identified 11 types of false belief systems derive from irrational thinking. However, Mohammad Nasir [19] has then summarized the irrational belief systems into 4 main themes, namely i) Demanding ii) Awfulizing iii) Discomfort Intolerance and iv) People Rating.

REBT looks at life problems as a chain, whereby the incidents that happened, the belief systems as well as how it affects emotion and behavior are interrelated. The problem chain could be summarized into the following $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$ concept [19].

A (*Activating event*)

B (*Belief system*)

C (*Consequences*) The outcome of emotional instability and behavior maladjustment as a result of B (belief system) towards A (activating event).

The main objective of REBT is to minimize the risk of self-destruction by increasing realistic thoughts through a more liberal life philosophy. As such, Ellis [9] stressed that in order to enhance emotional wellbeing and reduce the risk of problematic behaviour, therefore, narrow-minded life philosophy which was based on irrational thinking must be corrected.

Furthermore, Ellis [9] has presented an action plan to lead us towards a more liberal life philosophy by using several strategies which would challenge and correct the false belief systems in hope to produce positive emotion and behavior. According to Othman [22], the chain of the action plan in REBT could be summarized clearly through the relationship of $D \rightarrow E$. Mohammad Nasir [19] has then suggested the addition of another level, F as in $D \rightarrow E \rightarrow F$.

D (*Dispute*) Intervention (disputation) which is to challenge and to argue in order to correct the irrational belief systems into rational belief systems.

E (*Effect of disputing*) The outcome of intervention such as healthy emotion and positive behavior as a result of a more tolerant thinking.

F (*Follow up*) Action plan that follows including strategies to arrange the necessary steps in order to enhance the quality of life.

The issue and problems among the adolescents of divorced parents in the REBT context of this study are shown in Figure 1 below.

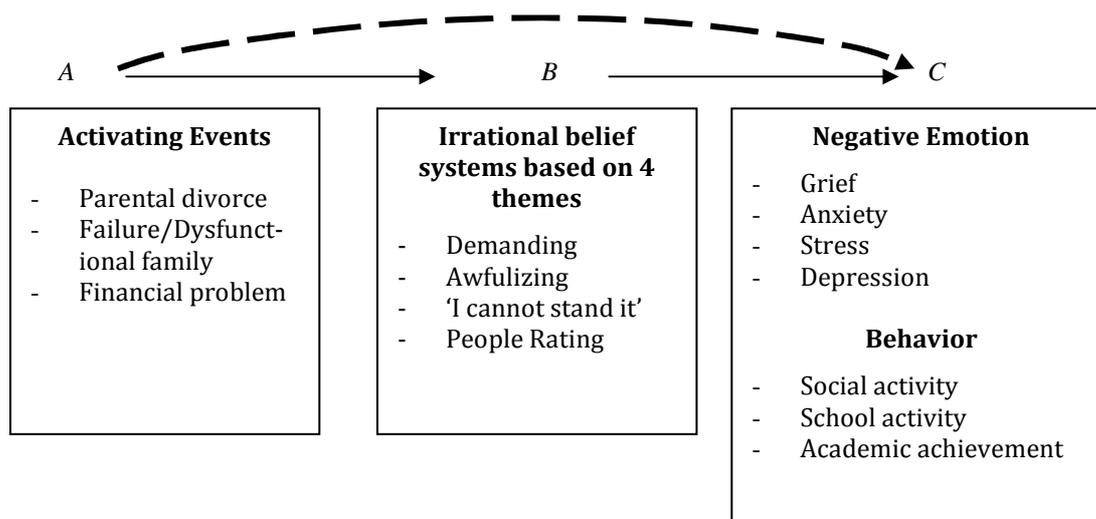


Fig. 1: Problem Chain of Adolescents of Divorced Parents based on REBT

In REBT Structured Group Counseling, belief systems among adolescents of divorced parents must be challenged and argued through 'D' which include intervention (disputation) with various strategies in order to readjust their belief systems to a more rational, positive and constructive trust systems after the parental divorce. Subsequently, healthier emotion and positive behavior 'E' would emerged as a result of a more tolerant belief systems. The action plans that follow 'F' include strategies to arrange the necessary steps in order to enhance the quality of their life. In this study, the next step would focus on the practise of social skill particularly on career and academic planning.

There are six (6) levels of development process in the REBT Structured Group Counseling, namely i) Relationship building (120 minutes); ii) Assessing between problems, personal and situation (120 minutes); iii) Preparing client for therapy (120 minutes); iv) Carrying out intervention (240 minutes); v) Arranging support strategy (120 minutes); and vi) Assessment and Conclusion (120 minutes). This group counseling module is adapted from Mohammad Nasir [16].

Based on previous studies, the REBT counseling approach is an effective approach to combat personal behavior and psychology problems including addiction in various cultural background and age [16,18,17,14,15].

Objectives:

The objectives of this study which are statistically measured with descriptive quantitative are as followed:

2.1 To measure the effect of REBT Structured Group Counseling towards Grief (GRI), Anxiety (ANX), Stress (STR) and Depression (DEP) based on the analysis of pre-test and post test mean changes between the therapy groups and control groups.

2.2 To measure the effect of REBT Structured Group Counseling towards Grief (GRI), Anxiety (ANX), Stress (STR) and Depression (DEP) by using the pre-test and post test measurement in the statistic analyses of MANCOVA based on subjects gender between the male therapy groups, female therapy groups and control groups.

Research Methods:

This quasi-experiment study involves two main variables, namely the independent variable which is the REBT Structured Group Counseling; and another independent variable which includes Grief (GRI), Anxiety (ANX), Stress (STR) and Depression (DEP) among adolescents of divorced parents. The subjects gender would be the moderator variable of this study.

The Divorced-Parents Adolescents Instrument by Mohammad Nasir et. al [20] are tested with pre-test and post test among the therapy groups and control groups. These instruments consist of 14 items of Grief (GRI) constructs, 11 items of Anxiety (ANX) constructs, 16 items of Stress (STR), 12 items of Depression (DEP) and other constructs in which there would be 78 items altogether. The validity of these instruments are tested by using the external criticism method, while the reliability are tested by using Alfa Cronbach at significant value of 0.05 by Mohammad Nasir et. al [20,21]. The overall coefficient value of the instruments validity is .78; while validity for GRI is .785, ANX is .806, STR is .75 and ANX is .78. Besides, the overall coefficient value of the instruments reliability is high with .938; while reliability for GRI is .917, ANX is .962, STR is .951 and ANX is .97. According to Anastasi [3] and Sidek [26], instruments with validity and reliability coefficient values higher than 0.6 are considered high in content validity and reliability.

Subjects selection in this study are based on the psychology profile of the adolescents of divorced parents and the characteristics of grief, anxiety and stress among them [20]. This study involves 90 subjects of form two students from Selangor, selected by using random sampling method based on the criterias mentioned above. A total of 60 subjects (15 in each group X 4 groups) are the therapy groups and 30 subjects (15 in each group X 2 groups) are the control groups. The grouping distribution are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Subjects based on Gender of Therapy Groups and Control Groups

Gender Facilitators	Occurences	Percentages (%)	Total of Groups
Male Therapy Group	30	33.3	2
Female Therapy Group	30	33.3	2
Control Group	30	33.3	2
Total	90	100	6

The effect on gender of the subjects are measured in this study. As such, the therapy groups are divided into two groups of 30 subjects (2 groups) of male therapy groups (RL); and 30 subjects (2 groups) of female therapy groups (RP); while another 30 subjects (2 groups of 15 male and 15 female) are the control groups. Data from the study are analyzed descriptively by using the pre-test and post test mean comparison analyses on Grief (GRI), Anxiety (ANX), Stress (STR) and Depression (DEP) between the therapy groups and control groups. Besides, t-test, MANCOVA and post hoc are also carried out to strengthen the therapy effect of REBT Structured Group Counseling towards the dependent variables of this study.

Results:

The results are analyzed based on the mean changes in descriptive analyses by MANCOVA and post hoc.

4.1 Results based on pre-test and post test mean changes in descriptive analyses of the therapy groups and control groups:

Table 2 below summarized the pre-test and post test mean changes in descriptive analyses of GRI, ANX, STR and DEP between the male therapy groups, female therapy groups and control groups.

Table 2: Summary of Pre-test and Post test Mean Scores in Descriptive Analyses of the Psychology Variables on the Male Therapy Groups, Female Therapy Groups and Control Groups.

Variables	Groups	Mean		Mean Changes
		Pre-test	Post test	
Grief (GRI)	Male therapy	8.3185	6.7580	-1.56
	Female therapy	7.8098	6.1060	-1.80
	Control	8.2944	8.4135	+0.12
Anxiety (ANX)	Male therapy	7.7912	6.1115	- 1.68
	Female therapy	7.7531	5.9015	-1.85
	Control	7.8348	7.7740	-0.06
Stress (STR)	Male therapy	7.9323	6.1665	-1.77
	Female therapy	7.6265	5.9270	-1.70
	Control	8.1032	8.1260	+0.02
Depression (DEP)	Male therapy	7.4595	5.9570	-1.50
	Female therapy	7.3295	5.8625	-1.47
	Control	7.6145	7.5625	-0.05

Table 2 above shows that the REBT Structured Group Counseling has successfully readjusted the belief systems of the subjects in the therapy groups; therefore, reduced the mean levels of GRI, ANX, STR and DEP as shown by the pre-test and post test mean comparison analyses. The mean of GRI for male therapy groups (-1.56) and for female therapy gourps (-1.80) as compared to control groups (+0.12); whereas the mean of ANX for male therapy groups (-1.68) and for female therapy groups (-1.85) as compared to the mean of control groups (-0.06). The mean of STR for male therapy groups (-1.77) and for female therapy groups (-1.70) as compared to control groups (+0.02); and the mean of DEP for male therapy groups (-1.50) and female therapy groups (-1.47) as compared to control groups (-0.05).

4.2 Results based on the pre-test and post test of MANCOVA statistical analyses of the variables between the therapy groups and control groups:

Table 3 below shows the effect of REBT Structured Group Counseling towards Grief (GRI), Anxiety (ANX), Stress (STR) and Depression (DEP) between the male therapy groups, female therapy groups and control groups based on MANCOVA statistical analyses.

Table 3: Summary of MANCOVA Statistical Analyses on the Effect of REBT Structured Group Counseling towards Pre-test and Post-test of the Psychology Aspects of Male Therapy Groups, Female Therapy Groups and Control Groups.

No.	Sources	Dependent Variables	Total KD	Dk	Mean KD	F Value	P Value
1	GRI Pre-test	GRI Post test	13.969	1	13.969	77.402	.000*
2	ANX Pre-test	ANX Post test	13.841	1	13.841	97.321	.000*
3	STR Pre-test	STR Post test	6.244	1	6.244	53.782	.000*
4	DEP Pre-test	DEP Post test	4.634	1	4.634	37.111	.000*

* p < 0.05

The results of MANCOVA analyses as shown in Table 3 above indicate that there is a significant differences between the pre-test and post test of all the pshychology variables which include Grief, Anxiety, Stress and Depression between the male therapy groups, female therapy groups and control groups with F value of GRI at $(1,89) = 77.402$ ($p < .05$); F value of ANX at $(1,89) = 97.321$ ($p < .05$); F value of STR at $(1,89) = 53.782$ ($p < .05$); and F value of DEP at $(1,89) = 37.111$ ($p < .05$).

Findings indicate that the effects of REBT Structured Group Counseling are significant and efficient towards all of the dependent variables which include GRI, ANX, STR and DEP. Since the results of MANCOVA indicate that there are significant differences in the pre-test and post-test of the variables between the therapy groups (male and female) and the control groups, therefore, the post hoc test must be carried out. Table 4 below summarized the post test of Turkey's post hoc analyses on the psychology aspects of GRI, ANX, STR and DEP between the male therapy groups, female therapy groups and control groups.

Table 4: Summary of Turkey's Post Hoc Analyses on the Post-test Differences of the Psychology Aspects Constructs.

Variables	(I) Groups	(J) Groups	(I-J)	Sig.
GRI post-test	Male therapy	Female therapy	.6520*	.014
		Control	-1.6555*	.000
	Female therapy	Male therapy	-.6520*	.014
		Control	-2.3075*	.000
	Control	Male therapy	1.6555*	.000
		Female therapy	2.3075*	.000
ANX post-test	Male therapy	Female therapy	.2100	.621
		Control	-1.6625*	.000
	Female therapy	Male therapy	-.2100	.621
		Control	-1.8725*	.000
	Control	Male therapy	1.6625*	.000
		Female therapy	1.8725*	.000
STR post-test	Male therapy	Female therapy	.2395	.574
		Control	-1.9595*	.000
	Female therapy	Male therapy	-.2395	.574
		Control	-2.1990*	.000
	Control	Male therapy	1.9595*	.000
		Female therapy	2.1990*	.000
DEP post-test	Male therapy	Female therapy	.0945	.861
		Control	-1.6055*	.000
	Female therapy	Male therapy	-.0945	.861
		Control	-1.7000*	.000
	Control	Male therapy	1.6055*	.000
		Female therapy	1.7000*	.000

* p < 0.05

Based on Table 4 above, the REBT Structured Group Counseling has successfully enhanced the GRI, ANX, STR and DEP among the male therapy groups and female therapy groups compared to control groups. Besides, findings also indicate that there is no differences of the effect of therapy based on gender. Thus, REBT Structured Group Counseling could be effectively implemented in order to reduce the levels of GRI, ANX, STR and DEP among adolescents (male or female) of divorced parents.

Discussion:

REBT Structured Group Counseling Module is based on Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach. As such, the psychology characteristics of the adolescents of divorced parents could be identified through REBT analysis, based on the chain relation between $A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow D \rightarrow E \rightarrow F$. Parental divorce, guardian's low income and the status of custody would form an antecedent known as 'A', which means the incident of parental divorce that is still active and clearly remembered by the adolescents involved.

'C' in the context of this study would be the psychology aspects such as feeling inferior as in grief (GRI), anxiety (ANX), stress (STR) and depression (DEP). Thus, 'C' is the outcome of negative feelings and maladjusted behavior which derived as a result of 'B' assessment (irrational belief systems) towards 'A'

(parental divorce). In this context, 'B' (irrational belief systems among adolescents of divorced parent) could be divided into four main themes, namely demanding, awfulizing, 'I cannot stand it' and people rating.

This study testified that based on REBT, the irrational belief systems has been successfully challenged and argued through the disputation strategies 'D' with the purpose to readjust the belief systems to a more rational belief systems. The rational analysis technique is widely practised for that purpose [12,14,15]. As a result of the disputation strategies, a more rational and tolerant belief systems emerged replacing the irrational belief systems among the subjects of divorced-parents adolescents. Subsequently, healthier emotion, adaptive and constructive behavior 'E' would emerged as a result of the new belief systems. The action plan 'F' that follows include strategies to arrange the necessary steps in order to enhance the quality of life. This study would focus on the practise of academic and career planning.

The adolescents of divorced parents are able to readjust their inward aspects including their thoughts, feeling and behavior through the implementation of REBT structured counseling [10,24]. The inward readjustment is proven by the reduced grief, anxiety, stress and depression. Besides, subjects of this study are able to plan their future goals clearly and realistically for both short term and long term.

Contribution To Knowledge:

This study provides guidance to the public and institutions involved, especially the authorities in an effort to help address the negative psychological symptoms among teenagers and children upon the divorce of their parents. The intervention focuses on improving the normal development process in the individual, especially in the face of stressful situations in the future upon the divorce of their parents. Rather than poor outcome, the teenagers are helped towards the direction of emotions and behaviors that are more positive and constructive. In addition, this study also contributes to the field of counseling through the implementation of REBT approach in group counseling in order to improve the psychological aspects of teenagers of divorced parents.

Conclusion:

Parental divorce is a negative antecedent to the adolescents. The effect of this antecedent would cause severe psychology problem to them such as grief, anxiety, stress and depression. If left unattended without the right mechanism to relief them from such psychology bondage, they might ended up with academic and study problem or even behavioral problem.

The early prevention therapy in this study is not meant to challenge or to be an alternative to the previous available programs. Nevertheless, this study serves as complement to the previous programs, particularly to strengthen and to diversify the methods, giving more options in understanding and to offer early intervention.

Strategies in this study especially the early intervention using the REBT Structured Group Counseling is effective particularly in the inward readjustment process involving the aspects of thoughts, feeling and behavior. This could be observed through reduced levels of grief, anxiety, stress and depression among the adolescents of divorced parents. Hopefully, these would be helpful guidances to the community especially to the person in charge of such cases. Finally, it is our hope that this study would instill awareness for more future research in this field to support the growth of an ideal generation.

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