

The Effectiveness of Expressive Writing Therapy in Controlling Emotions of Adolescent Inmate

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ABSTRACT

The present research focuses on teenage angry emotions which are efforts to reduce angry emotions. It used expressive therapy by writing down the deepest thoughts or feelings about depressed individual experiences. The therapy aim to help teens to express their angry emotions in a more positive direction. This study aimed at determining the effectiveness of expressive writing therapy on angry emotions in adolescents in the first class prison in Makassar city with one group pre-test post-test design. The subjects in this study were teenagers aged 16-19 years who had an Anger Rumination Scale (ARS) scores that were classified as very high and high score. The expressive writing therapy is carried out for four consecutive days. Based on the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test results, it is obtained p value = 0.043. The mean of the pre-test is 75 and the mean of the post-test is 45.5. These results indicate that there is a decrease in subject's angry emotions after writing therapy and expressive writing therapy is effective to reduce teenage angry emotions. Expressive writing therapy can be used as a cathartic tool and can also be used as a help for adolescents to express negative emotions, especially angry emotions.

Keywords: *Angry emotions, expressive writing, inmate*

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood. Generally, at this stage adolescents experience periods are out of balance and are easily to change their mood and their decision. Adolescence is also a phase that shows the peak of emotional development. Powerful emotional development in adolescents is shown at the age of 12 years and above [1]. Adolescence is characterized by rapid changes in every aspect of life. One aspect that has changed is the emotional aspect [2]. The existence of emotional aspects of anger can encourage teens to engage in various negative behaviours that have an impact on the environment. Anger emotions experienced by adolescents become a very important part in the formation of emotional responses to most criminal behaviour [1]

The emotional nature of adolescents who are still in the process of being stable encourages adolescents to clash or experience disagreements with other people. The nature of the teenager can cause significant problems for the teenager. This makes adolescents vulnerable to criminal acts that are triggered by angry emotions [3]. Thompson and Bynum [4] stated that juvenile delinquency will increase when adolescents are in the 14-19 years growth stage. One juvenile delinquency who is deviant is a criminal act.

Teenagers who commit delinquency usually cannot control their emotional state.

Emotional reactions occur when a person faces certain situations. Individuals will interpret various experiences then poured in the form of emotional reactions [5]. Rice and Dolgin [3] in their research found that negative thoughts can cause negative emotional reactions in a person. These thoughts are like blaming one-self, blaming others, even the environment. The study of Lepore [6] suggested that anger is a form of high resentment. It appears when someone discovers things that are not in accordance with his views or desires. There are many causes that encourage people to get angry, one of the causes that can cause anger is being insulted. Regarding the angry emotions of teenagers, one of the news obtained from tribunmakassar.com on October 2, 2013, reported two teenagers who gang up on their own friends. Both teenagers were angry because they felt offended by the status of Facebook posted by their colleagues. The teenager felt insulted by his own friend on social media.

Based on preliminary data collection on August 22, 2016 in Makassar class 1 prison, it was found that 24 (80%) adolescents stated that they are very angry when they get insulted and when they argue with others. This shows that

most of the adolescents in Makassar prison are very angry when they get insulted. Prison teenagers are also very angry when arguing with others.

Forms of expression of angry emotions in adolescents differ. Eighteen out of 30 (60%) Makassar prison class 1 adolescents stated that they would express their redness by threatening and beating. Five out of 30 (16%) adolescents choose to remain silent. Four out of 30 (13%) adolescents claim to be rebelling. Three out of 30 (10%) adolescents choose to get married. Teenagers who are in class 1 prison in Makassar experience various symptoms when angry. Common symptoms felt when angry are headaches, trembling, heartache, and anxiety. Based on preliminary data obtained that 12 out of 30 (40%) adolescents stated that they felt headaches when angry. Five of the 30 (16.6%) adolescents claimed to be shaking. Twelve out of 30 (40%) adolescents feel hurt. One in 30 (3.3%) feels restless when angry.

Based on the above data, it was found that most of the adolescents in Makassar prison have high angry emotions. This is indicated through the form of expression and the symptoms experienced. Forms of expression experienced are hitting, rebelling and praying, while the symptoms they feel when angry are headaches, trembling, heartache, and anxiety. Based on several events and findings obtained, it can be concluded that adolescence is a period that is experiencing a peak emotional development.

Adolescence can also be said as a period that is very easy to change, is explosive and takes place more often as a result of physical change and growth. Therefore, teens often show angry emotions. This research will focus on anger emotions possessed by adolescents and efforts in managing anger emotions. One stage to be able to achieve emotional management is by writing. Expressive writing therapy is a form of means to communicate with yourself. Writing is an activity that gives birth to thoughts and feelings. Expressive writing therapy can explore and express thoughts, emotions, and spirituality that can develop a thought and awareness of an event [7].

Writing provides many benefits, among others, when writing disturbing events will get a new understanding of emotional events. Problems that seem tense become more manageable after writing on paper. Writing down haunting experiences can help solve the problem itself and if the problem has been solved then someone will not think about it anymore [8].

One of studies conducted by [9] shows that the administration of expressive therapy caused excessive emotional decline in participants when expressing their emotions through writing. So writing emotional experiences can be used as a cathartic media for adolescents who cannot express their anger. Writing emotional experiences in the form of expressive writing facilitated the subject to evaluate, analyze, and reassess pressing events experienced. The media is able to make someone gain an understanding,

develop a solution, self-motivation, accept existing circumstances, learn from the events experienced, and focus positive thoughts. Therefore, angry emotions experienced by adolescents can be overcome using the media to write emotional experiences.

Lepore [6] in their research on the effect of expressive writing therapy on the level of student anxiety showed that the useful effects of the writing interventions on aggression and liability were stronger at higher levels of community violence exposure. Through expressive writing therapy individuals reflect unpleasant events or trauma. This reflection facilitates individuals to change their cognitive, regulate emotions for the better, become a cathartic tool, gain new energy, direct attention, relieve emotional distress, and provide opportunities to focus on their goals and behavior. Based on some of the research evidence above that shows the superiority of expressive writing therapy in overcoming several kinds of disorders, therefore the authors intend to conduct research on angry emotions in adolescents in prison by using expressive writing therapy. It is intended to be able to help reduce the risk of risk that can cause various emotional reactions such as criminal actions that will arise due to angry emotions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a one group pretest-posttest design research design. Research that uses one group pretest-posttest design is a study that only uses one group of subjects. First the subject is given measurements for one day. Measurements were made by giving a measurement scale angry emotions to the subject, then after three days, researchers gave treatment. Subjects who have high angry emotions will be given treatment that is writing emotional experiences for 25 minutes every day in four consecutive days. Before and after the treatment is given, the researcher will give an anger meter to the subject to measure the subject's anger level right away. After being given treatment, the researchers gave measurements again using a measurement scale angry emotions right after treatment.

Subjects in this study were prison adolescents aged 10-22 years and male. Rice and Dolgin [3] suggested that adolescence begins around the age of 10 to 22 years. Rude and Haner [8] suggested that men will feel the benefits of writing emotional experiences compared to women. This happens because individuals who tend to be introverted or not accustomed to expressing their emotions will feel more benefits compared to individuals who are extroverted. Data collection techniques in this study is to use a scale. The scale used in this study is the Anger Rumination Scale (ARS). Sukhodolsky et al [11] suggested that the Anger Rumination Scale (ARS) is used to measure trends in focusing on anger, past memories of anger episodes, and thoughts of causation from anger episodes that have occurred. The hypothesis in this study can be proven by comparing the pre-test and post-test scores of the subjects. The difference in scores can be seen by testing hypotheses using statistical analysis.

Hypothesis testing is performed using the statistical analysis of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with SPSS 22.0 for windows. The statistical method used to test hypotheses is nonparametric statistics. The nonparametric test used in this study is the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. This test is used to test the hypothesis that is to know the different levels of angry emotions before and after giving treatment in the form of writing therapy.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The description test results in the study were obtained from the response answers that were filled out by the research subjects.

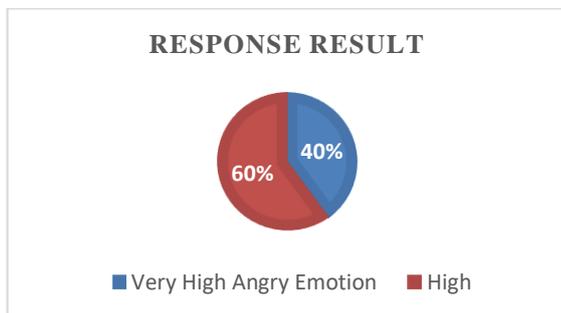


Figure 1. Response Result.

The five subjects namely MIS, AGS, ADM, WDK, and SHR show high angry emotion. Most of them have high anger emotions with the number of subjects, three and subjects who had very high angry emotions numbered two people. The entry of prisoners into prison is caused by several cases. The case experienced by the subject is a case that shows a high level of angry emotions, including a case of beating, fighting to murder.

Rice and Dolgin [3] stated that anger is an emotion that arises in daily life. Behaviour that contains angry emotions is shown through actions such as silence, withdrawal, and aggressive actions that can hurt others such as fights, beatings, to lead to murder.

MIS admits that the emergence of angry emotions on the subject is caused by a sense of disappointment. He also admits that the anger experienced by her was due to the subject's disappointment towards her boyfriend who considered her having an affair. Houltberg et. al. [12] suggested that anger is an acute emotional reaction caused by a stimulus. Stimulus in question can be a threat, disappointment or frustration. Meanwhile, the angry emotions experienced by AGS subjects are in the very high category with the score of 86. One of the things that causes his angry is when his younger siblings are taunted constantly so that a sense of resentment arises in himself which causes him to motivate to fight. Houltberg et. al. [12] stated that the characteristics of anger can be seen in various aspects, one aspect of angry emotions is the emotional aspect. Emotional aspects are marked by a sense of discomfort, annoyance,

frustration, revenge, want to fight, rampage, hostile, hurt and blame.

The subjects in this study have a range of ages from 16 to 19 years. In this case, the subjects are included adolescent categories. One of the reasons for becoming the SHR subjects is that because they were involved in beatings. One of the reasons for becoming the SHR subjects is that because they were involved in beatings. Shaw et. al [13] states that there are several forms of emotion that often arise in adolescents, namely feelings of anger, shame, anxiety, jealousy, jealousy, sadness, joy, affection and curiosity. Basically, adolescents are not able to control their emotions which are more dominating the behaviour of these teens. It can be seen that the involvement of the subject in the beatings is due to the subject's inability to be unable to control his excessive anger. In the measurement before the treatment, the score of angry emotions of ADM was 64 which were included in the high category. After receiving expressive writing treatment, a measurement was applied again and there is a decrease in the emotional temper score of the subject which is 44 included in the low category. The score is obtained based on the ARS scale measurement.

The level of angry emotions of ADM subject based on the anger meter on the first measurement (O1) before treatment was 10 which was included in a very high angry category. After being given a temper emotion treatment, the score decreases to 8. In the second measurement (O2) there is a decrease. Before the treatment, the score was 9 and after being given treatment is 6. In the third measurement (O3) there is a decrease of which the score was 7 before being given treatment and after being given treatment the emotional temper, the score of the subject is 4. Lastly, in the fourth measurement (O4) before the emotional temper treatment, the score was 6 and after being given treatment, the angry emotions of the subject becomes to 3.

The results above indicate that there is a change in the form of decreased levels of angry emotions of ADM after being given expressive writing treatment. The level of angry emotions of the subject also decreases every day when viewed from measurements using the Anger Meter. The level of angry emotions of ADM decreases after treatment. ADM has no difficulty in writing in the session of writing therapy. The results of the writing of the subject are also more numerous than other subjects, except for AGS. The change experienced by the subject after expressive writing is that the subject's feelings become more relieved and feel calmer because they have expressed their emotions through books. One of the goals of writing therapy is to express excessive or extraordinary emotions and to reduce stress. The pressures of the subjects are overflowed through writing so that the subject feels more relieved and tanned when writing down his feelings through a diary. This is consistent with the changes experienced by the subject after expressive writing for four consecutive days.

Based on the statement of each subject after being given treatment for several days, ADM feels more relieved and

calmer because they have expressed their emotions through the book. Meanwhile, MIS states that after the writing session, he feels more comfortable. Furthermore, WDK states that the subject's anger memories still appear and he feels that the memories of anger are reduced because they are overflowed in the written form. Likewise, SHR feels that the subject's feelings become calmer after writing. Although MIS initially has difficulty in writing down her feelings, after walking for several days, the subject seems to feel smoother in expressing her feelings into the diary. The change experienced by MIS is the same as that is experienced by ADM, that is, the subject's feelings after writing become quieter than before writing in the diary because the subject can express various frustrations into the diary.

There are five goals in writing therapy. One of them is expressing various high emotions and reducing tension. This is according to what the subject has written during the closing session of the writing therapy. The subjects write that the subject's feelings after writing become calmer than before writing in a diary because the subject can freely express various frustrations into the diary. AGS sometimes has difficulty in writing their feelings, but the results of the writing of the subject are almost as much as the ADM writing. Being calm is experienced by the subject after receiving an expressive writing treatment. AGS feels better after writing anger in the diary during the closing session of writing therapy.

The above shows that the subject feels calm and the subject's thoughts become more positive after expressive writing for four consecutive days. Pennebaker and Smyth [8] stated that writing is an alternative form of therapy that is preventive and can improve individual physical and mental health, including changing thoughts to be more positive, such as thinking about things that are good. The SHR subject experienced some difficulty in writing but after getting direction from the facilitator, the subject was able to write various forms of anger. All the writing of the subject tells the subject of anger that the subject experienced in the past by expressing the cause of the subject's anger, one of them is angry because the subject's best friend hits the subject's siblings so the subject feels very angry and causes the subject to hit the person. This shows that the subject has writing that is useful for yourself. Pennebaker and Smyth [8] states that one of the writing requirements that is useful for the author is the content of the subject's writing using cognitive words on the last day such as thinking about cause, effect, and reason and understanding of the events experienced.

WDK subjects never show difficulties in writing down their feelings. The subject also has a lot of writing. After the last session or the last day of the treatment, the subject also reveals that writing in a diary makes the subject feel lighter because the subject's complaints can be expressed through writing. Pennebaker and Smyth [8] revealed that one of the goals of expressive writing therapy is to help the subject

reduce the various perceived pressures. The pressures that the subject feels are expressed through writing into a diary which makes the subject feel better. The complaints that the subject feels are written into a book so that the subject's feelings become lighter.

The results of the research hypothesis test using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test show the results of a significant value of $p = 0.043$ ($p < 0.05$) meaning that there is an effect of expressive writing therapy on angry emotions. The results of this study support the findings of Van der Oord et. al. [14] that there is a decrease in participants' angry emotions after writing therapy treatment. Writing emotional experiences in expressive therapy can minimize angry emotions in adolescents. Writing therapy can be used as a cathartic tool for adolescents to express their angry emotions.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of research that has been described previously, the results of the hypothesis test show that expressive writing therapy can reduce angry emotions. Effective expressive writing therapy to reduce angry emotions in adolescents. Based on the results of the research, suggestions that can be put forward are: 1) Subjects are expected to be able to use expressive writing therapy as a way to reduce angry emotions, so that angry emotions that the subject presses or stores can be channelled through writing. 2) The prison can implement writing therapy as a form of intervention in helping prison residents who have high angry emotions, 3) for further researchers are expected to choose subjects who have a penchant for writing. The next researcher is expected to increase the number of subjects to be studied. Further researchers are also expected to make observations on each subject to see the behaviour that the subjects come up during the writing therapy session take place.

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