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Cognitive Restructuring and Late Adolescents Pornography Consumption: An Experimental Study

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of increasing exposure to pornography in late adolescence presents a serious challenge for counselors because it impacts motivation, behavior, and psychosocial development. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of individual counseling using the Cognitive Restructuring technique in reducing pornography viewing intensity in late adolescents in the Sayang Jiwa dan Otak Community, and to examine the influence of gender differences on the success of the intervention. The research method used a Guidance and Counseling Action Research (PTBK). approach with three late adolescent participants, two males and one female, who were selected purposively. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and measurements of pornography viewing intensity during pre-treatment, counseling sessions, and post-treatment. The results showed a positive change in motivation to reduce pornography viewing habits in all three participants. At pre-treatment, viewing intensity scores were in the moderate to high category (50.6%–73.5%). After two counseling sessions, there was a decrease in the percentage of DOM clients from the high category (73.5%) to the moderate category (55.6%), while SH and AL clients showed small but consistent changes. Differences in results between participants indicate that gender also influences counseling effectiveness, with male participants showing a faster decrease in intensity than female participants. These findings underscore that individual counseling using Cognitive Restructuring techniques is effective in helping late adolescents reconstruct maladaptive thought patterns related to pornography, although gender factors need to be considered in intervention strategies. This abstract is expected to encourage readers to further explore the role of cognitive approaches in addressing addictive behavior among adolescents.

Kata Kunci:

Konseling;
Cognitive restructuring;
Pornografi;
Remaja akhir

ABSTRAK

Fenomena meningkatnya paparan pornografi pada remaja akhir menjadi tantangan serius bagi konselor karena berdampak pada motivasi, perilaku, serta perkembangan psikososial. Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis efektivitas konseling individu dengan teknik Cognitive Restructuring dalam menurunkan intensitas menonton pornografi pada remaja akhir di Komunitas Sayang Jiwa dan Otak, serta menelaah pengaruh perbedaan gender terhadap keberhasilan intervensi. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan Penelitian Tindakan Kelas Bimbingan dan Konseling (PTBK) dengan tiga partisipan berusia remaja akhir, dua laki-laki dan satu perempuan, yang dipilih secara purposive. Data dikumpulkan melalui observasi, wawancara, dan pengukuran intensitas perilaku menonton pornografi pada pra-tindakan, sesi konseling, dan pasca-tindakan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya perubahan motivasi positif untuk mengurangi kebiasaan menonton pornografi pada ketiga partisipan. Pada pra-tindakan, skor intensitas menonton berada pada kategori sedang hingga tinggi (50,6%–73,5%). Setelah dua sesi konseling, terjadi penurunan persentase pada konseli DOM dari kategori tinggi (73,5%) ke sedang (55,6%), sedangkan konseli SH dan AL menunjukkan perubahan kecil namun konsisten. Perbedaan hasil antarpartisipan menunjukkan bahwa gender turut memengaruhi efektivitas konseling, di mana partisipan laki-laki lebih cepat menunjukkan penurunan intensitas dibandingkan partisipan perempuan. Temuan ini menggarisbawahi bahwa konseling individu dengan teknik Cognitive Restructuring efektif membantu remaja akhir merekonstruksi pola pikir maladaptif terkait pornografi, meski faktor gender perlu dipertimbangkan dalam strategi intervensi. Abstrak ini diharapkan mendorong pembaca untuk menelaah lebih jauh peran pendekatan kognitif dalam mengatasi perilaku adiktif di kalangan remaja.

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INTRODUCTION

Exposure to pornography among late adolescents has become an increasingly concerning phenomenon over the past five years. Data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection indicate that 66.6% of male adolescents and 62.3% of female adolescents have accessed pornography through online media (Rahmawaty, 2021). Pornography consumption has direct effects on cognitive and behavioral aspects, including distorted patterns of thinking, decreased concentration in learning, and a tendency toward risky sexual behavior (Saputra & Movitaria, 2022). Adolescence itself is characterized by identity development, sexual drives, and emotional instability (Haidar & Apsari, 2020). An inability to control exposure to pornography may therefore have serious consequences for adolescents' psychosocial development.

Several studies have emphasized that environmental factors, particularly family conditions and access to technology, play a major role in shaping pornography-viewing habits (Smith & Brown, 2023). Meanwhile, neuroscientific research has shown that excessive exposure to pornography may impair executive brain functions associated with self-control (Kraus et al., 2016). These findings highlight the importance of counseling interventions that focus on cognitive processes to help adolescents modify maladaptive core beliefs that contribute to compulsive pornography consumption.

Cognitive Restructuring is a change-oriented technique applied when disruptions occur within fundamental cognitive structures or core beliefs. The use of cognitive restructuring is particularly important in addressing pornography addiction because excessive exposure to pornography has been shown to impair executive brain functioning and trigger cognitive distortions among adolescents (Kraus, Voon, & Potenza, 2016; Saputra & Movitaria, 2022). Because the problem is rooted in neurological changes and patterns of thinking, normative approaches alone are insufficient; therefore, interventions that specifically target these cognitive processes are required (Kraus et al., 2016). This technique works by helping clients identify, challenge, and replace irrational thoughts and negative automatic thoughts that maintain addictive behavior with more rational, realistic, and adaptive patterns of thinking (Beck, 2011; Connolly & Walker, 2023). Through the reconstruction of these maladaptive thought patterns, clients can develop stronger internal motivation for change, which can ultimately facilitate a reduction in the intensity of pornography-related addictive behavior (Barnett, Cooper, & Sturme, 2018).

Studies examining Cognitive Restructuring in relation to the effects of pornography, as well as its effectiveness in addressing addictive behavior more generally, have been widely reported (Barnett, Cooper, & Sturme, 2018). However, the application of cognitive restructuring to specific cognitive distortions among late adolescents in local community settings remains very limited. Most previous approaches have tended to focus primarily on normative prohibitions without addressing the underlying problems related to executive brain functioning (Kraus, Voon, & Potenza, 2016). The novelty of the present study lies in its attempt to conceptually integrate the management of cognitive distortions, the enhancement of internal motivation for change, and an ongoing individual counseling process. In addition, this study addresses a gap in the literature by explicitly exploring how gender differences are associated with responses to cognitive interventions (Sinković, Stulhofer, & Božić, 2013). Accordingly, the study is expected to contribute to the formulation of intervention strategies that are not only cognitively adaptive but also sensitive to the gender characteristics of adolescents.

This study aims to examine the implementation of individual counseling using the Cognitive Restructuring technique to reduce the intensity of pornography viewing among late adolescents in the Sayang Jiwa dan Otak Community (KSJO), while also examining differences in responses based on gender. This technique is intended to replace irrational thoughts with more rational, realistic, and adaptive ones (Beck, 2011; Connolly & Walker, 2023). By examining changes in motivation, behavioral intensity, and the influence of gender on intervention effectiveness, this study is expected to provide practical contributions to the development of counseling strategies for addressing addictive behavior among adolescents. Furthermore, the study raises further questions regarding how gender, social support, and cultural context may moderate the effectiveness of cognitive interventions in counseling practice.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a Guidance and Counseling Action Research (PTBK) design. The study population consisted of all 30 members of the Sayang Jiwa dan Otak Community in Pontianak. Participants were selected purposively based on the following criteria: being in late adolescence, approximately 22 years of age; having been exposed to pornography for more than one year; and being willing to participate in individual counseling services. Based on these criteria, three primary participants, identified by the initials SH, DOM, and AL, were selected, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Participants

No.	Client	Cycle I	Cycle II	Cycle III	Location
1	SH	June 6, 2024	July 2, 2024	July 13, 2024	KSJO Pontianak
2	DOM	June 11, 2024	June 25, 2024	July 5, 2024	KSJO Pontianak
3	AL	June 11, 2024	June 25, 2024	July 5, 2024	KSJO Pontianak

Source: Researcher Data (2024)

The research instruments consisted of a pornography-viewing intensity scale, an interview guide, an observation sheet, client reflection records, and documentation. The intensity scale was developed based on indicators of addictive behavior and was initially tested to establish content validity through expert review and a simple reliability test. Observations and interviews were conducted to strengthen the quantitative data, while client reflections were used to explore their motivation for behavioral change.

The study was implemented using the Guidance and Counseling Action Research (PTBK) framework, which was structured into three continuous cycles. Each cycle consisted of four interconnected stages: (1) Planning, which involved preparing educational materials on the dangers of pornography and cognitive restructuring instruments; (2) Action, involving individual counseling sessions lasting approximately 45 minutes and focusing on the restructuring of maladaptive thought patterns; (3) Observation, which was conducted to monitor motivational dynamics and actual changes in behavioral responses; and (4) Reflection, which aimed to evaluate reductions in behavioral intensity and analyze the obstacles experienced by the clients. The results

of the reflection conducted in each cycle served as the basis for adjusting the intervention strategies in the subsequent cycle, thereby facilitating optimal active engagement among the clients.

The intervention materials included education concerning the harmful effects of pornography, restructuring of maladaptive thought patterns, and developmental assignments in the form of daily activity schedules. The research was conducted from June to July 2024 at the Sayang Jiwa dan Otak Community (KSJO) in Pontianak.

The data were analyzed using quantitative descriptive statistics to examine pornography-viewing intensity scores before and after the intervention. The analysis involved calculating percentage changes and classifying the level of intensity into high, moderate, and low categories. Qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and reflections were analyzed thematically to identify patterns of motivation and barriers. The underlying assumption of the study was that behavioral change is influenced by cognitive reconstruction and clients' active engagement in the counseling process (Brown & Johnson, 2022: 92–95).

Data validity was maintained through methodological triangulation involving questionnaires, interviews, and observations, as well as expert validation. Reliability was enhanced through consistency in the use of the intensity scale and systematic recording of client reflections. The analysis also took gender differences in counseling responses into consideration, in line with findings indicating that the gender of both counselors and clients may influence intervention effectiveness (Pane, 2018; Fazny et al., 2024).

The scope of the study was limited to three late adolescents from a single community; therefore, the findings should be generalized with caution. Another limitation was the relatively small number of counseling sessions, meaning that the sustainability of the outcomes still requires further follow-up support. Nevertheless, this study makes an important contribution by demonstrating the effectiveness of the Cognitive Restructuring technique in reducing the intensity of pornography viewing and by opening opportunities for further research on potential moderating factors, such as gender and social support.

RESULT

The initial assessment showed that all three participants had pornography-viewing intensity levels ranging from moderate to high. Client SH obtained a score of 50.6%, which was categorized as moderate; DOM obtained 73.5%, which was categorized as high; and AL obtained 50.6%, which was categorized as moderate. These findings indicate that pornography-viewing behavior had become relatively embedded in the daily lives of the late adolescents participating in the study.

Following the individual counseling intervention using the Cognitive Restructuring technique, a decrease in pornography-viewing intensity scores was observed. In the second session, SH's score decreased to 46.8%, while DOM's score decreased to 67.1%, whereas AL remained stable at 50.6%. In the subsequent cycle, DOM showed a substantial decrease to 55.6%, moving from the high to the moderate category. SH demonstrated a moderate change, while AL showed increased motivation to change despite no meaningful reduction in the percentage score. The results of the implementation of counseling using the Cognitive Restructuring technique for SH, DOM, and AL are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2. Results of Cognitive Restructuring Counseling for Client SH

Assessment Stage	Score	Percentage	Category
Pre-test	40	50.6%	Moderate
Cycle II	37	46.8%	Moderate
Cycle III	36	45.5%	Moderate

Source: Researcher Data (2024)

Table 3. Results of Cognitive Restructuring Counseling for Client DOM

Assessment Stage	Score	Percentage	Category
Pre-test	58	73.5%	High
Cycle II	53	67.1%	High
Cycle III	44	55.6%	Moderate

Source: Researcher Data (2024)

Table 4. Results of Cognitive Restructuring Counseling for Client AL

Assessment Stage	Score	Percentage	Category
Pre-test	40	50.6%	High
Cycle II	40	50.6%	High
Cycle III	44	50.6%	Moderate

Source: Researcher Data (2024)

In addition to the quantitative scores presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4, qualitative data derived from participant reflections indicated increased awareness of the negative effects of pornography and the emergence of motivation to change existing habits. Differences in outcomes across participants also suggested a possible influence of gender on counseling effectiveness. Male participants demonstrated a more rapid response, as reflected in more substantial reductions in scores, whereas the female participant showed changes primarily in motivational aspects that had not yet been reflected in the intensity score.

Overall, the Cognitive Restructuring technique was shown to reduce the intensity of pornography-viewing behavior, particularly through the restructuring of maladaptive thought patterns and the enhancement of clients' motivation. Nevertheless, the variation in outcomes indicates the need to consider gender-related factors and to personalize counseling strategies in order to achieve more optimal intervention outcomes.

DISCUSSION

The main findings of this study indicate that individual counseling using the Cognitive Restructuring technique can reduce the intensity of pornography viewing among late adolescents in the Sayang Jiwa dan Otak Community. Client DOM showed a substantial decrease from the high category (73.5%) to the moderate category (55.6%), whereas SH demonstrated a moderate reduction, and AL remained relatively stable despite an increase in internal motivation. These findings are important because they indicate that cognitive interventions have the potential to modify maladaptive thought patterns underlying addictive behavior.

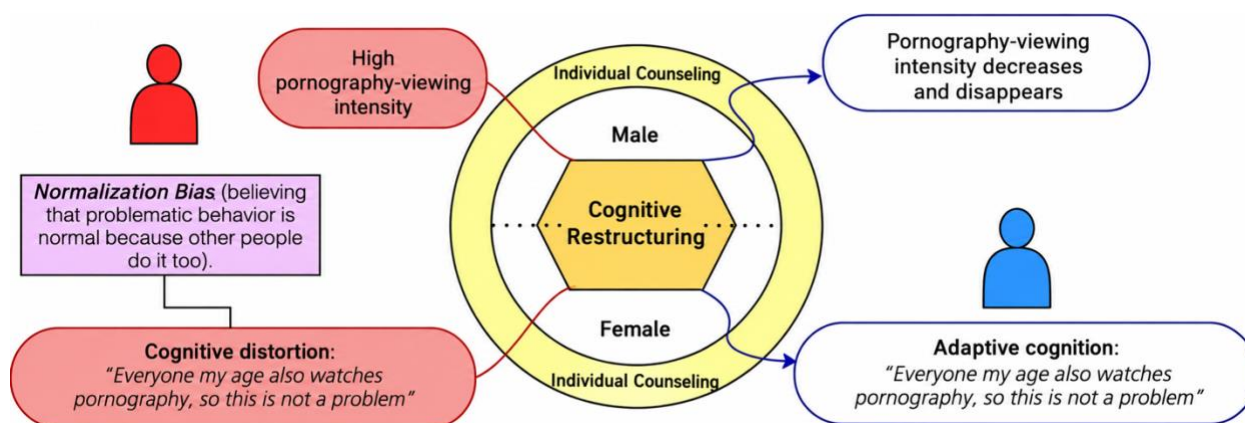


Figure 1. The Process of Individual Counseling Using Cognitive Restructuring for Adolescents with Serious Pornography-Viewing Intensity (Source: Researcher Data, 2024)

Figure 1 illustrates the process through which individual counseling using the Cognitive Restructuring technique can reduce pornography-viewing intensity among late adolescents. The process begins with cognitive restructuring, which focuses on identifying, challenging, and replacing maladaptive thoughts with more adaptive ones (Beck, 2011). This change in thought patterns subsequently enhances adolescents' internal motivation to make behavioral changes. The motivation that gradually develops encourages a reduction in pornography-viewing habits, ultimately leading to decreased behavioral intensity (Barnett et al., 2018). Gender serves as a moderating variable, as this study indicates that male participants responded to the intervention more rapidly than the female participant. This finding is consistent with Sinković et al. (2013), who reported differences between males and females in patterns of pornography consumption and responses to pornography. Thus, the diagram emphasizes the importance of integrating cognitive approaches with gender sensitivity in counseling practice for late adolescents, particularly in addressing addictive behavior.

The significance of these findings is that behavioral change among adolescents cannot be achieved solely through prohibition or normative approaches; rather, it should be directed toward the reconstruction of thought patterns. According to Beck (2011), cognitive restructuring can reduce negative automatic thoughts that maintain maladaptive behavior, including those occurring in the context of addiction. This finding is consistent with Barnett et al. (2018), who demonstrated the effectiveness of Cognitive Restructuring in reducing pornography addiction behavior among adolescents.

The relationship between the findings of this study and previous literature is also consistent with neuroscientific studies showing that pornography exposure alters brain responses to sexual stimuli, thereby highlighting the need for interventions that target cognitive processes (Kraus et al., 2016). This may explain why participants who were more receptive to cognitive intervention, namely DOM and SH, demonstrated more substantial changes than AL, who continued to show resistance.

Differences in outcomes based on gender reveal another important dimension. Male participants showed a more rapid response than the female participant. An alternative explanation may be associated with sociocultural and psychological differences in the way pornography is perceived. Sinković et al. (2013) emphasized that males tend to consume pornography more intensively than females; therefore, they may experience the effects of intervention more quickly

once motivation for change emerges. In contrast, females tend to perceive pornography as being more closely related to emotional factors, which may require a longer process of change.

The gender-based differences observed in this study provide an interesting preliminary indication for further exploration. Although the male participants appeared to respond to the intervention more rapidly than the female participant, claims regarding gender-based intervention effectiveness should be interpreted with considerable caution given the limited sample size of only three participants. This tendency may be associated with sociocultural differences in the way pornography is perceived (Sinković et al., 2013), whereby females may require a longer period of change because of the emotional complexity involved. Therefore, these findings are not intended to conclude that cognitive interventions are inherently more effective for one gender than another. Rather, they highlight the importance of counselors' sensitivity and ability to adapt interventions to gender-specific characteristics in facilitating the intervention process.

The practical relevance of these findings lies in their application to counseling practice. Counselors can use Cognitive Restructuring to help adolescents identify, challenge, and replace irrational thoughts related to pornography. Accordingly, this technique can be positioned as one of the effective approaches in both clinical and educational counseling settings for addressing addictive behavior.

This study has several limitations. The number of participants was very limited, consisting of only three individuals; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized broadly. In addition, the number of counseling sessions was relatively limited, making it difficult to determine the sustainability of behavioral changes over the long term. Another limitation is that external factors, such as family support and peer environment, which may also influence pornography-viewing behavior, were not explored.

Future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants while taking into account gender, sociocultural background, and duration of pornography exposure. Future studies may also incorporate a mixed-methods approach with more robust inferential statistical analyses and compare the Cognitive Restructuring technique with other counseling approaches, such as mindfulness-based counseling or behavioral therapy.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the implementation of individual counseling using the Cognitive Restructuring technique showed a tendency to reduce the intensity of pornography viewing among late adolescents in the Sayang Jiwa dan Otak Community. The cognitive restructuring process was observed to help clients identify, challenge, and modify maladaptive thought patterns, which subsequently encouraged the development of internal motivation to reduce the behavior.

In addition, the findings provide an initial indication that gender may influence the speed of clients' responses to the intervention, with male participants tending to respond more rapidly than the female participant. However, considering that this study involved a very limited sample of only three participants, these findings cannot yet be broadly generalized to establish the absolute effectiveness of the technique.

As a practical implication, counselors may adopt operational steps of Cognitive Restructuring, such as training clients to record and evaluate their automatic thoughts as part of an

intervention strategy aimed at restoring adolescents' self-control functions, while continuing to take into account the personal and gender characteristics of each client.

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