

Positive thinking training for improving self-acceptance of children in correctional facility

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Abstract

Conflicting with the law will make them feel a lot of pressure and psychological changes like shame, regret, and unable to accept themselves. If they have positive thinking, they will easily accept their condition. This study aimed to observe the effect of positive thinking training in improving the self-acceptance of juveniles who were undergoing a period of correctional program. The subjects of this study included 24 juveniles at Class I Juvenile Correctional Facility Kutoarjo, all males aged 14-17 years with a minimum educational level of primary school, a minimum of 1-month correctional program, and first-time criminal sentence. Self-acceptance was measured using the self-acceptance scale. The research method used was an experimental method with the pre-test post-test with control group design. The results of this study indicated that self-acceptance score of the subjects in the experimental group has increased after they received positive thinking training. It can be seen from the increase of the mean score from 33.58 with SD = 3,919 in the pre-test to 41.42 with SD = 6,259 in the post-test. It means that positive thinking training can effectively increase self-acceptance of children at Class I Juvenile Correctional Facility Kutoarjo.

Keywords

Children, criminal, experiment, positive thinking training, self-acceptance

Introduction

Juvenile delinquency case in Indonesia continues to exhibit a significant increase. Indonesian Child Protection Commission or Komisi Perlindungan Anak Indonesia (KPAI) reports that in 2021 alone, there were 126 juvenile delinquency cases (KPAI, 2020). The increase aligns with the increasing global trend in juvenile delinquency cases (Muna *et al.*, 2020). In Indonesia, most delinquencies are related to violence and abuse (Sopiah *et al.*, 2017).

Juvenile offenders should be liable for their acts in accordance with the prevailing regulation. Following article 1, paragraph 3 of Law no. 11 of 2012 on the Juvenile Justice System, Children in Conflict with the Law should be defined as a child between 12 and 18 years of age suspected to commit a crime. Children in conflict with the law should correct their behavior in a Juvenile Correctional Facility or Lembaga Pembinaan Khusus Anak (LPKA).

Serving a sentence in LPKA could be difficult for a child and may result in several psychological changes (Rochmawati, 2014). As a child in conflict with the law, individuals may suffer from feelings of regret, shame, useless, as they perceive no advantages compared to other children of their age (Kusumaningsih, 2017).

Previous studies showed that prisoners often suffer from psychological stressors and problems when serving their sentences in a correctional facility (Ariyanto, 2016; Kusumaningsih, 2017). Many of them are reported to find it difficult to exhibit acceptance (Hilman & Indrawati, 2017). Our field study found that most children in Kutoarjo Class I Juvenile Correctional Facility lacked self-acceptance, a variable highly pivotal in determining mental health and

positive psychological functions (Bernard, 2013). Individuals who fail to have self-acceptance are likely to see themselves and their conditions negatively, preventing them from recognizing their strengths.

A number of factors have been reported to improve individuals' self-acceptance. Among the factors is the individuals' stable self-concept (Hurlock, 2011). A stable self-concept allows individuals to see themselves positively in both favorable and unfavorable conditions. The notion of self-concept can be seen as a set of ideas, perceptions, values, and beliefs held by individuals, which may affect their social interaction. conditioning is necessary to implement positive thinking, especially among children serving their correctional program in LPKA. Among various factors pivotal in determining individuals' self-acceptance is one's cognitive judgment (Davies, 2008). In other words, positive cognitive judgments on one's self, others, and their live events may allow individuals to accept themselves more easily.

Previous studies mostly involve individuals with special needs, reporting a self-acceptance improvement among individuals with special needs (Tentama, 2014). Similarly, Khoiryasdien & Warastri (2020) also report that bipolar survivor can exhibit self-acceptance after participating in positive thinking training. The elderly receiving positive

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thinking training also exhibit better self-acceptance (Indarwati *et al.*, 2021). Since positive thinking training is reported to improve self-acceptance among the elderly, persons with disability, and bipolar disorder survivors, it is necessary to see its effectiveness in improving self-acceptance of juvenile offenders in the correctional facility.

Having positive thinking is important for children in The Juvenile Correctional Facility, as it is believed to positively affect them. Children serving in The Juvenile Correctional Facility are still in their cognitive development phase and possess the ability to understand and digest the materials delivered through Positive Thinking Training. Similar to persons with disability, bipolar disorder survivors, and the elderly, juvenile offenders are also likely to accept themselves with everything they have done in life. Most children in The Juvenile Correctional Facility hope to return to the community and live a normal life. In this regard, our study proposes a positive thinking-based intervention to overcome low self-acceptance among juvenile offenders in Kutoarjo Class I in The Juvenile Correctional Facility

Grounded on the description above, we hypothesize that positive thinking training may effectively improve self-acceptance among juvenile offenders in The Juvenile Correctional Facility. An improvement was noticed between pre-and post-intervention scores. Score difference was also noticed when comparing the experimental group to the control group.

Method

This experimental study applied pretest-posttest with control group design. The measurement was performed before and after the intervention was made in order to see the causal relationship among variables (Saifuddin, 2019). The participants in this study were children in Class I Juvenile Correctional Facility, Kutoarjo, Purworejo, Central Java. They were boys, 14-17 years of age, have served their sentence for at least one month and sentenced to 4-month imprisonment, and not recidivists. Twenty-four children with low to moderate score of self-acceptance were recruited using the purposive sampling technique and assigned into experimental and control groups with 12 participants each. The purposive sampling technique was used to ensure that participants fit the purpose of the study.

A self-acceptance scale was employed to measure children's self-acceptance in Kutoarjo Class I The Juvenile Correctional Facility. The scale was adopted from Risa (2014), which has been tested to adolescents. The scale was developed based on Sheerer's aspects of self-acceptance (Cronbach, 1963). The scale was tested on a group of adolescents in orphanage and exhibited Alpha (α) coefficient of 0,925.

In the present study, a positive thinking training was performed as the intervention. The intervention module was a result of modification of positive thinking training module designed by (Zulni & Koentjoro, 2019). In general, this experimental study comprised two stages: preparation and implementation stages. At the preparation stage, we administered the research permit, performed the preliminary assessment, designed the training module, and selected the participants, facilitators, and observers. The positive thinking training was organized in three meetings, and each

meeting lasted for approximately 150 minutes. The activities during the training included psychoeducation regarding self-acceptance and positive thinking, games, and doing a worksheet and evaluation. The trainer was a psychologist with more than 5 years of experience.

We performed a set of statistical analyses to test the proposed hypothesis, including Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon tests. Wilcoxon test is a non-parametric statistical test to compare two paired samples to see the difference in population average (Maryadi, 2020). Meanwhile, Mann-Whitney U is usually used to see whether or not there is a mean score difference in two independent sample groups (Riyadi & Prabawati, 2016).

Result

Prior to testing the hypothesis, the data were described and displayed in Table 1. As shown in Table 1, the experimental group reported an increased self-acceptance score after receiving the intervention i.e., positive thinking training. The pretest mean score was 33.58; SD=3.919 and improved to a posttest mean score of 41.42; SD =6.259 after the treatment was given. However during the follow-up measurement, the improvement of participants' self-acceptance was not significant, as shown by the mean score of 42.17 (SD=7.146). Meanwhile, the control group did not exhibited significant difference in pretest (mean= 37.08; SD= 2.503), posttest (mean= 36.08; SD= 6.302) and follow ups (mean=37.42; SD=6.142).

Mann-Whitney U and Wilcoxon tests were performed to test the proposed hypothesis, which is displayed in Table 2 below.

As shown in Table 2, a significant difference was noticed after participants received the positive thinking training compared to the control group. This difference indicates that the proposed hypothesis was supported with the Z value of -1.824 and p-value of 0.034 (< 0.05). A significant difference in self-acceptance score was also noticed in the follow-up score (i.e., 2 weeks after the intervention) with a Z-score of -1.909 and p-value of 0.028 (< 0.05).

The discrimination test results in each group also demonstrated a significant improvement in self-acceptance score in the experimental group, as indicated by the pretest-posttest score ($Z = -2.669$ $p = 0.005$ (< 0.05)).

In the control group, no significant difference was noticed, as indicated by the pretest-posttest ($Z = -0.629$ $p = 0.264$), posttest - follow-up ($Z = -1.117$ $p = 0.132$), and pretest - follow-up conditions ($Z = -0.039$ $p = 0.484$).

Discussion

This study mainly aims to see the effect of positive thinking skills on self-acceptance among children in a correctional facility. The study result indicates that the proposed hypothesis was supported, meaning that Positive thinking training can improve the self-acceptance of children in a correctional facility. The experimental group (i.e., participants receiving positive thinking training) exhibited a higher score of self-acceptance than the control group (not receiving the training).

Table 1. Self-Acceptance Score of Experimental and Control Groups

	Pretest		Posttest		Follow-up	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Experimental Group	33.58	3.919	41.42	6.259	42.17	7.146
Control Group	37.08	2.503	36.08	6.302	37.42	6.142

Table 2. Self-Acceptance Score Discrimination Test

Self-Acceptance Score Discrimination Test (Experimental vs. Control Group)			
	Z		p
Pretest	-2.429		0.007
Posttest	-1.824		0.034
Follow-up	-1.909		0.028

Self-Acceptance Score Discrimination Test on Each Group				
	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Z	p	Z	p
Pretest-posttest	-2.669	0.004	-0.629	0.264
Posttest - follow-up	-0.628	0.265	-1.117	0.132
Pretest - follow-up	-2.748	0.003	-0.039	0.484

Participants in the experimental group stated that they experienced changes in feelings and perception of the situation, condition, and problems they were facing. In this regard, they stated that they began to accept the situation and conditions in The Juvenile Correctional Facility as the consequences of their action. Before receiving the positive thinking training, participants were afraid of community rejection once they were released from the correctional facility. After participating in the positive thinking training, they began to be able to develop self-acceptance, as shown by their willingness to accept their condition, commitment to making self-improvement, and promise not to make the same mistake.

This finding supports the previous study conducted by Davies (2008), stating that one of the pivotal factors of self-acceptance is the individual’s own cognitive judgment. After learning the positive thinking techniques during the training, participants exhibited more positive cognitive judgment of their current condition. They exhibited more confidence in serving the correctional program without blaming themselves or others. The participants see their current condition as a test and invaluable learning for their future. Having a more positive perception of their condition, participants could accept their weaknesses and limitation more easily, which supports previous studies (see e.g., (Tentama, 2014; Faraza et al., 2020; Khoiryasdien & Warastri, 2020; Indarwati et al., 2021). According to Tentama (2014), disabled persons with more positive thoughts exhibit better self-acceptance. Meanwhile, Khoiryasdien & Warastri (2020) discovered that individuals with positive thinking can exhibit self-acceptance as a bipolar disorder survivor. Elderly with positive thoughts in Indarwati et al. (2021) study also can accept themselves as an elder who must stay at home receiving treatment. The present study shows positive thinking training can effectively improve self-acceptance of normal individuals like children in The Juvenile Correctional Facility and those with special needs (persons with disability, bipolar disorder survivor, and the elderly).

It is necessary to scrutinize how a thought can make an individual accept him or herself. Individuals with positive

thoughts tend to focus on the positive sides of an issue they are facing. During the initial sessions of positive thinking training, participants mostly focused on expressing negative feelings and thought when they were asked to write down the event, thought, and feelings. However, during the second meeting, they began to write positive sides of their problems.

They can even dig out the positive aspect of themselves and develop a plan for their future. This finding supports Muthmainnah (2018), who states that positive thinking training is effective to manage psychological problems such as self-acceptance. The positive thinking training can help children understand their thinking process better and turn their mindset to be more positive to accept their condition.

In addition to self-acceptance improvement, positive thinking training made participants to slowly develop a positive attitude toward their problems. Participants were able to realize the appropriate attitude toward the correctional programs, such as following all activities and adhering to the rules in the correctional facility. This positive attitude allows individuals to see a problem rationally and look for the best solution, instead of giving up easily or running from the problem (Zulni & Koentjoro, 2019). All participants realized that developing positive attitude can positively affect themselves. Having a good attitude can be helpful for them when filing a remission and parole.

Participants’ self-acceptance improvement was also addressed by the facilitator’s training material presented during the Adversity training phase. The material was presented together with a short video on the effect of positive thinking and self-acceptance. Siahaan et al. (2012) report that the adversity phase is deemed pivotal in motivating children in the correctional facility. Children who are able to build adversity tend to find it easier to improve their motivation and self-acceptance (Fitriana, 2013).

Participants stated that, initially, they hardly interact with other inmates due to fear of rejection and lack of confidence. After participating in the training, they have more confidence to interact with other children in the correctional facility, as they realize that they have similar legal problems. This

shows that all participants began to accept their condition and others' conditions. This finding supports Fitriana (2013), who reports that self-acceptance significantly affects individuals' communication and interaction with their environment. Individuals with good self-acceptance are likely to use their weaknesses and strength to positively support their future success. Having good self-acceptance, they hardly lack confidence and become more optimistic about achieving their future goals (Priyono *et al.*, 2018).

The positive thinking training was conducted using group approach. A group discussion was conducted in every meeting. All participants were given opportunities to share or ask for feedback, or express their thought. The positive thinking training with group approach is considered more effective for cognitive intervention (Zulni & Koentjoro, 2019). Applying group approach, The training focuses on the disclosure among participants and makes the learning process more easy-to-understand because the group facilitator helps them understand the material through a discussion. Moreover, opportunities to give and receive feedbacks may also improve their self-esteem, belief, understanding, and trust in others (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).

All participants also benefit from the training, including new insights regarding positive activities during serving the correctional program. All training participants were able to list a positive activity they wanted to do in the correctional facility and once they were released. This finding is in line with Lestari (2014), who states that positive coping strategies are helpful for individuals in improving their self-acceptance. Participants managed to follow the training process properly, supporting (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005) who state that the positive thinking training could be effectively presented to children in Kutoarjo Class I Juvenile Correctional Facility.

Conclusion

Following the study result, it is concluded that positive thinking training can effectively improve the self-acceptance of children in The Juvenile Correctional Facility, indicated by the higher self-acceptance score after participating in the positive thinking training.

Evaluation and Recommendation

In general, the positive thinking training conducted for juvenile offenders in the correctional facility was done properly. However, the limitation was found in the time limit given for the training because it was conducted together with other agendas involving the training participants. In this regard, future studies are recommended to confirm the correctional facility schedule to minimize schedule conflict that prevents participants from participating in the training optimally. Following the study result, it is concluded that positive thinking training can effectively improve the self-acceptance of children in The Juvenile Correctional Facility. This improvement is indicated by the higher self-acceptance score after participating in the positive thinking training.

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