

The Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Counseling and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Counseling to Reduce School Burnout

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze acceptance and commitment therapy counseling and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling to reduce students' school burnout. To do so, the study employed pretest and multiple posttest design by involving 10 students chosen using purposive sampling from 430 students in Public Senior High School 3 Pati (SMA N 3 Pati). Their data were collected using School Burnout Inventory. Further, the results of repeated measure anova showed that acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling were effective to reduce students' school burnout. For more, the discussion in this paper has more focus on the implication of counseling in school practice.

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INTRODUCTION

School burnout is a condition when there is a lack of compatibility between students' ability and the burden of school tasks. The expectation for school achievement or the expectation of parents and teachers of students make them exhaustion due to school demand, cynical attitude, and tend to avoid school because they are not tough enough as students. These learning boredoms are divided into three, namely emotional and cognitive fatigue indicated by the attitude of quitter, fatigue, and listless in learning.

Bask and Salmela-Aro (2013) explain that school burnout consists of exhaustion due to school demands, a cynical and impolite attitude towards the school, and feelings of incapability as a student. To sum up, school burden covers the feelings of incapability as a student, a cynical towards the school, and exhaustion at the school.

School burnout is significant to discuss since it is related to cognitive, behavior and emotional issues, such as depression and stress which further can cause decrease in interest, and motivation on learning, absence from attendance at school (absenteeism), and even school dropout.

Based on the results of direct observation of SMA N 3 Pati students, it was known that there were several students having high level of school burnout. According to Ates (2016) school burnout is initially caused by students' stress during education processes, a lot of demands, and other psychological factors, such as (distracted, stress, depression, and others) which can cause them experiencing school burnout.

Andriani, Himma, Alizar, Amin and Mulawarman (2017) reveal that the high level of school burnout is an indication of risk factors related to students' involvement at school causing them to have low well-being. This is one of factors influencing students' learning at school. Moreover, school burnout is a psychological syndrome caused by long-term stress or pressure experienced by students at school.

Counseling can be used as a means of helping students in achieving development, and overcoming school burnout

Walker (2017) states that acceptance and commitment therapy is really helpful in reducing burnout. Through ACT approach, clients are invited to avoid their problems although they have experienced uneasy efforts to deal with the problems. Besides, this therapy can train clients to accept their bothersome thoughts, and considered unhappy by applying values they believe. By doing so, it is expected that the students will accept their own condition. The effects of acceptance and commitment therapy counseling tend to focus on psychological flexibility on individuals.

Hashemi, Asheghi, and Naami (2019) assume that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling is effective to reduce burnout. Thorough psychological flexibility, students can increase their mental health and acceptance on their problems, particularly in reducing burnout.

Counseling with acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy approaches is a form of intervention given to students who experience high level school burnout. This counseling is expected to assist individuals to reduce school burnout.

Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) counseling was the intervention conducted in this study. The figure who developed this theory is Hayes, Kirk Strosahl, and Kelly G. Wilson. ACT is described as a part of the third wave of cognitive behavioral therapy (Hayes, and Smith, 2005:1). ACT is integrated to an empirical cognitive behavior-based contextual theory known as relational frame theory (RFT) and Functional Contextualism.

Hayes, Jason, Frank, dan Akihoko (2006) mentions that ACT helps someone to reduce sufferings he experiences by improving his awareness and abilities on what he desires for a better life. ACT utilizes homework and practice of action as a way to create an effective action to help counselee living with his own values which are related to their habits. For example, the given homework requires a counselee to write down their life goals, and value aspects they believe in every aspect of life. In this way, acceptance and commitment therapy enables individuals'

experiences to come and go, while the individuals pursue meaningful lives.

Hayes, Bach, and Boyd (2010) in their study mentions that ACT is considered as a very effective counseling approach to solve problems, such as boredom or burnout which cause depression. Besides, this approach also increases mental health since it enables people to accept every single experience and event that ever occurred and make them normally function in daily life based on individuals' life goals.

Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy (MBCT) is a combination of cognitive therapy by involving the use of Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction Program (MBSR) developed by Jon Kabat-Zim and his colleague, Segal, Teasdale, and Williams. Mindfulness concepts have aspects and stages, namely meditation, consciousness, current experience, and acceptance.

Spiegler and David (2010) say that Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy teaches subject to focus his attention to the current event without disturbance of strong emotion and negative thoughts, free himself from judge, return awareness to the current state gradually to deal with distracted thoughts. This therapy also trains skills in recognizing and detaching any mind symptoms leading to stress though breathing technique and body sensation.

Luken and Amanda (2016) assume that the therapy functions significantly to reduce burnout issues. Their study concludes that mindfulness training is able to show a statistically significant reduction in work related to burnout after mindfulness training.

By referring to above description, therefore, this study was intended to examine the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy counseling and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling to reduce school burnout. The study focused more on students' school burnout. According to Salmela-Aro, et.al. (2008) school burnout is caused by tension and stress related to school and anxiety symptoms which are parts of significant risk factors in contributing negative influence on students' academic achievement.

METHODS

This study applied pretest and multiple design. Meanwhile, the experimental subjects were chosen using purposive sampling from 430 students having high level of school burnout. Of 430 students, 10 were chosen. For more, random assignment was used to place 5 students as members of two experimental groups receiving acceptance and commitment counseling and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling.

The data collection technique employed by the researchers was school burnout inventory scale (SBI) developed by Salmela-Aro et. al. consisting of 9 items. In this instrument, the researchers conducted an equivalence test through back-translation process, expert validation, validity test, and reliability test. The results of tests for the instrument showed that all items were said to be valid ($r_{xy}=0.440-0.653$), and gained alpha cornbach coefficient of 0.677. Further, the collected data were analyzed using repeated measure anova.

Table 1. The Systematization of the Implementation of ACT and MBCT Counseling

Sessions	ACT	MBCT
1	Acceptance of relationship (Assessment)	Acceptance of relationship (Assessment)
2	Introduction to ACT approach assessment on experiences or school burnout issues (Cognitive Difusion)	Introduction to MBCT approach assessment on experiences or school burnout issues
3	Identification of maladaptive thoughts, feelings, beliefs (Present Moment and Self Context)	Identification of issues
4	Identification of values, acceptance	Meditation and body scanning to soften muscle and breath
5	Commitment Development (Commitment Action)	Meditation and follow-up development

There were four steps in this study. First, the provision of pretest to examine students' school burnout prior to the provision of intervention. Second, the provision of intervention to the experimental group I, namely acceptance and commitment therapy counseling

in six meetings within 45-60 minutes for each, and the intervention to the experimental group II in form of mindfulness-based cognitive within the same time allotment as the group I (see table 1). Third, once the interventions were given, the researchers conducted posttest to find differences in the results of interventions. The last, after 2 weeks, the experimental subjects were given follow-up to examine how far the students experienced changes in mindset, and school burnout.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data (pretest-posttest-follow-up) were prepared prior to analysis. Meanwhile, the condition of students' school burnout before receiving treatments was at the high level. After they obtained the intervention, their school burnout experience reduction. Based on the results of pretest, posttest, and follow-up, the counseling of acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy could reduce students' school burnout.

Table 2. Mean, SD and Results of Repeated Measures ANOVA on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Mindfulness based Cognitive Therapy Counseling

Intervention	Pre		Post		FU		F1
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
ACT	52.0	1.58	21.0	1.58	19.6	1.14	1649.7*
MBCT	52.6	1.67	18.0	1.57	16.4	1.79	799.1*
F2							7571.8*
ACT*MBCT							6.26*

Information:

- ACT : Acceptance and commitment therapy
- MBCT : Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy
- F1 : Anova repeated measure test results
- F2 : Results of differences between groups
- *p < 0.01

Table 2 presents the results of repeated measure anova on within-subject. It showed that the counseling of acceptance and commitment therapy was effective to reduce students' school burnout ($F_{(4,74)} = 1649.770$; $p < 0.01$). Similarly, the counseling of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy was effective to reduce students' school burnout ($F_{(4,74)} = 799,165$; $p < 0.01$). It can be seen that based on these results, the counseling of mindfulness-based cognitive therapy gained the highest effectiveness in reducing students' school burnout.

Based on the results of the time test effect in table 3, there was a significant difference between the results of pretest, posttest, and follow-up. It indicated that the counseling of acceptance and commitment therapy was effective to reduce the school burnout of the students of SMA N 3 Pati. In addition, the counseling of acceptance and commitment therapy was also effective to reduce students' school burnout seen from the increase in time effect from (T1-T2), (T1-T3), and (T2-T3). (see table 3).

Table 3. The results of multiple comparisons of time

Time	MD	SE	P
ACT			
T ₁ - T ₂	31.000*	.837	.00
T ₁ - T ₃	32.400*	.678	.00
T ₂ - T ₃	1.400*	.245	.014
MBCT			
T ₁ - T ₂	34.600*	1.208	.00
T ₁ - T ₃	36.400*	1.249	.00
T ₂ - T ₃	1.800*	.374	.026

Information:

- ACT : Acceptance and commitment therapy
- MBCT : Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy

The findings showed the interaction effect between ACT and MBCT in reducing school burnout ($F_{(4,74)} = 6.26$; $p < 0.01$). It indicated that MBCT counseling contributed the highest advantages in reducing school burnout at T3 compared to other groups (T1/T2)

According to Tania, Suryani and Tati (2018) the aim of acceptance and commitment therapy counseling in relation to school burnout is to do self-encouragement in improving psychological flexibility, namely the ability to do total and conscious contact to current state as a

living creature, and be able to act based on adopted values.

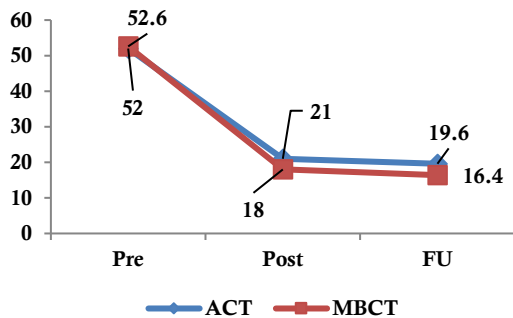


Figure 1. The Results of Group Interactions Between Times

Furthermore, Savitri and Listiyandani's study (2017) reveal that the way mindfulness overcomes school burnout is by exercising meditation for students so that they can train themselves to have complete awareness and give full attention to themselves and their daily lives, will be able to regulate the environment, have control over activities undertaken, effectively using opportunities in the environment, be able to choose, and create contexts that are in accordance with their needs and values. Again, mindfulness also has a positive contribution to other aspects of psychological well-being, namely the purpose of life, self-growth, self-acceptance, independence, and positive relationships with others.

The above assumption was based on the following premise, that the use of acceptance and commitment therapy counseling and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling is not only aimed at assisting clients, but also to make them obtain specific ability in facing the effects of school burnout at high level, and able to apply it in daily life.

Through the counseling of acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, professional counselors can improve clients' ability in facing school burnout.

Raiziene, Pilkauskaitė, and Rita (2014) argue that individuals who experience high level of school burnout would have their subjective well-being low from time to time, and vice versa.

The findings of this study implied that counselors may use acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling to reduce students' school burnout. Besides, in implementing these approaches, the counselors should pay attention on the limited time to modify cognition, verbal, and counselees' role because in counseling processes, the involvement of counselees' experience conditions are needed.

The findings also proved that the counseling of acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy were effective to reduce school burnout. However, the findings still had limitations, namely the difficulty in arranging training implementation schedules. It was because the students needed to wait for school hours to end, the quite crowded room in the training, and the hot temperature of the room during the counseling.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effectiveness of acceptance and commitment therapy and mindfulness-based cognitive therapy counseling. The researchers have proved that these approaches were effective to reduce the school burnout experience by the students of SMA N 3Pati. It can be seen from the significant differences on results of pretest, posttest, and follow-up analyzed using repeated measure ANOVA.

The effectiveness test in this study was done by focusing on cognitive structuring in the beginning of the counseling. On the other hand, this study had no control group as a comparison, so the future studies are suggested to add control group and other variables which are still related to school burnout, such as school dropout, school engagement, absenteeism, and loneliness. Also, the timeframe used for repeated measurements in this study was quite short, so the future studies are expected to use quite a long time.

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