

The Influence of Behavioristic Counseling on Students' Toxic Relationships

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Abstract

The objective of this study was to evaluate the influence of behavioristic counseling on students' toxic relationships. A quantitative research design with a One Group Pre-test Post-test approach was employed to measure the effect of the counseling intervention on eighth-grade students at SMPN 4 Mataram. The population consisted of 378 students, with a sample of 96 selected based on high levels of toxic relationship behaviors. Data collection involved a validated questionnaire, observations, interviews, and documentation reviews. The intervention included three sessions of behavioristic counseling focusing on modeling techniques. Data analysis was performed using a t-test to compare pre-test and post-test scores. Results indicated significant improvements in students' behaviors post-intervention, with a majority showing reduced levels of toxic relationship behaviors. The t-test analysis confirmed the intervention's effectiveness, with a t-value of 7.459, surpassing the critical value of 2.262. The study recommends implementing behavioristic counseling in schools to address toxic relationships, emphasizing the need for personalized approaches to cater to individual student needs. These findings highlight the potential of behavioral counseling to improve students' social interactions and overall well-being, suggesting further research to refine and expand this intervention method.

Keywords: Behavioristic Counseling, Toxic Relationships, Modeling Technique, Student Behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional period between childhood and adulthood, encompassing biological changes related to the body, cognitive changes related to concrete thinking, and socioemotional changes related to relationships with the opposite sex (Aulia, 2014:09). This phase is crucial for identity formation and character development, as well as for adapting to the surrounding environment. Adolescents often experience emotional fluctuations, accompanied by rapid physical and mental growth. Environmental factors can influence adolescents, leading to frustration, conflicts in friendships and romantic relationships, and resulting in social and cultural competitiveness. Over time, these issues may culminate in toxic relationships within friendships.

Friendship is a mutually beneficial social relationship between individuals. Healthy friendships support, help, and understand one another. Generally, friendship involves two or more people frequently spending time together and can evolve into deeper, supportive bonds. The quality of a friendship is characterized by mutual support and varying levels of conflict (Terion et al., 2015:76). External issues in friendships stem from environmental influences, dishonest behavior, and jealousy, while internal issues arise from individual perspectives and actions, such as dependency on the opposite sex and sexual urges.

A toxic relationship is an unpleasant and potentially harmful relationship. While commonly experienced by young adolescents, it can affect individuals of any age. Mataputun and Saud (2020:32-37) note that adolescents need to adapt when entering unfamiliar environments. Toxic relationships in friendships can harm both physical and mental health. Psychologically, individuals in toxic relationships may develop low self-esteem, pessimism, and lack of confidence. Negative remarks and behaviors from friends can lead to self-hatred and mental health issues (Zulfiana et al., 2023:69-74).

Support from friends is crucial for individuals in toxic relationships, as it strengthens mental health. Adolescents form numerous relationships, making it essential to educate them about positive and

negative relationship dynamics. Understanding the impacts of toxic relationships fosters self-awareness in social interactions with peers, family, and the environment. Behavioral counseling is necessary to help adolescents comprehend toxic relationships.

Behavioral counseling, based on learning theories of individual behavior, helps clients learn new behaviors to solve their problems. This approach is rooted in experimental psychology and investigates principles of human behavior (Sudyana et al., 2020:81). Behavioral counseling aids individuals in resolving interpersonal, emotional, and specific decision-making issues by eliminating inappropriate behaviors and forming new, appropriate ones. This method is effective for various behavioral issues, from simple to complex.

In this study, the modeling technique, a form of behavioral counseling, is employed. This technique involves observing a model and reinforcing the observed behavior. Modeling can occur through direct or indirect experiences by observing a model's behavior. Essentially, modeling is learning through observation, involving adding or subtracting observed behaviors, generalizing observations, and cognitive processing (Damayanti & Aeni, 2016:100)

Observations in June 2022 at SMPN 4 Mataram revealed issues of toxic relationships, such as students using harsh language, calling each other names, physical violence like hitting and pushing, and harassment like public humiliation and inappropriate touching.

METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative research design using a One Group Pre-test Post-test approach to evaluate the effect of Behavioral Counseling on toxic relationships among eighth-grade students at SMPN 4 Mataram. The design is chosen for its effectiveness in measuring the impact of an intervention by comparing pre-test and post-test results, as outlined by Sugiyono (2016). The population consists of 378 eighth-grade students, including 172 males and 206 females. Through purposive sampling, students exhibiting high levels of toxic relationships were selected to ensure the sample accurately represents the target population for the intervention.

Data collection utilized a questionnaire featuring open-ended, closed-ended, and Likert scale items to assess the level of toxic relationships. The questionnaire's validity and reliability were established through a pilot study and subsequent statistical analysis. The research procedure was divided into three stages: the pre-test stage measured the initial impact of toxic relationships, followed by the treatment stage involving three sessions of Behavioral Counseling, and concluding with the post-test stage to measure the intervention's impact. Additionally, data were gathered through direct observation of the school environment and student behavior, interviews with teachers and counselors, and documentation reviews of past records and photographs.

For data analysis, a t-test was employed to compare pre-test and post-test scores, determining the effectiveness of the Behavioral Counseling intervention. The analysis involved applying statistical techniques to interpret the data in alignment with the research objectives and hypotheses. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were processed to identify significant changes in the levels of toxic relationships following the intervention. This comprehensive methodological approach ensures a thorough evaluation of Behavioral Counseling's impact on reducing toxic relationships among middle school students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study involved 96 students as samples to evaluate the impact of interventions in addressing toxic relationship issues among students. The data collected included information from three classes (VIII-1, VIII-2, VIII-3). The scores given in the questionnaire indicated the severity of toxic relationship experiences among the students, with categories set based on score ranges: High, Medium, and Low.

Among the 96 students, the distribution of scores and severity categorization showed significant variation. The highest recorded score was 111, and the lowest was 52. The average score from this data was 75.84, indicating that most students tended to fall into the medium category in terms of their experiences with toxic relationships.

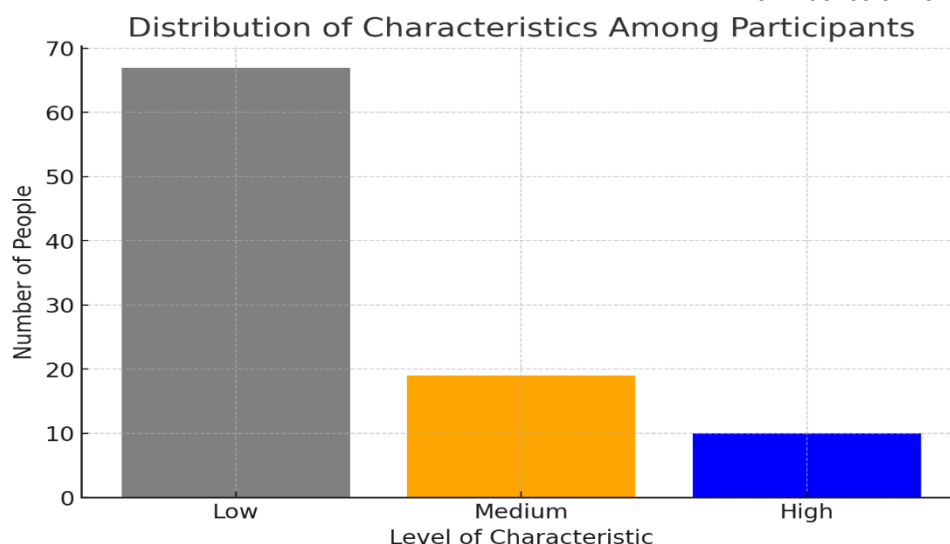


Figure 1. Percentage Data of Questionnaire Results

The pre-test results for 96 students revealed that 10 students met the criteria for the study (Figure 1). These 10 students were then selected to receive specific treatment (Table 1). The treatment administered to these students was behavioral counseling, a method aimed at altering negative behaviors that may have developed as a result of being in toxic relationships. This counseling method was chosen for its efficacy in helping individuals recognize and change unhealthy thought patterns and actions that they may have adopted in their interpersonal relationships.

Behavioral counseling is a form of therapy that focuses on modifying detrimental behaviors and thought processes. In the context of this study, the objective was to assist students who had potentially developed negative behaviors due to their involvement in toxic relationships. By identifying these behaviors and understanding their origins, students could work towards adopting healthier habits and attitudes.

Out of the 96 students who underwent the pre-test, the distribution of characteristics among participants varied significantly. The majority of the students, approximately 70, exhibited low levels of the targeted characteristic, while a smaller group, around 20 students, displayed medium levels. Only a minimal number of students, less than 10, showed high levels of the characteristic in question.

The bar graph in Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of these characteristics among the participants. The x-axis represents the level of characteristic (low, medium, high), while the y-axis indicates the number of people. The graph clearly shows that a significant proportion of the participants fall into the 'Low' category, with the number decreasing progressively across the 'Medium' and 'High' categories.

The decision to implement behavioral counseling for the 10 selected students was grounded in the need to address and rectify the negative behaviors and thought patterns that can emerge from toxic relationships. Behavioral counseling, also known as behavior therapy, is particularly effective in these situations as it involves practical techniques and exercises that help individuals replace negative behaviors with positive ones.

The approach is structured around several key principles. The initial step involves recognizing the specific negative behaviors that need to be addressed. This could include actions, thoughts, and emotional responses that are counterproductive or harmful. Students are guided to understand the origins of these behaviors, which are often rooted in past experiences, particularly those involving toxic relationships. Through various therapeutic techniques, students are encouraged to develop and reinforce positive behaviors. This could involve role-playing, cognitive restructuring, and reinforcement of desirable behaviors.

The implementation of this treatment involves regular counseling sessions where students engage in exercises and activities designed to modify their behavior. These sessions are conducted in a supportive environment where students can discuss their experiences and receive guidance on how to cope with and change their negative behaviors.

The pre-test results highlighted the prevalence of low levels of the targeted characteristic among the majority of students. By selecting the 10 students who met the specific criteria, the study focused on

those most in need of intervention. Behavioral counseling was chosen as the treatment method due to its proven effectiveness in addressing and modifying negative behaviors. This approach not only helps students recognize and understand the root causes of their behaviors but also equips them with the tools and strategies necessary to adopt healthier, more positive behaviors. The ultimate goal is to foster better interpersonal relationships and overall well-being among the students.

The pre-test results for 96 students indicated that 10 students met the criteria for the study and were selected to receive specific treatment. These students underwent behavioral counseling, a method aimed at altering negative behaviors that may have developed due to toxic relationships. This approach was chosen for its effectiveness in helping individuals recognize and change unhealthy thought patterns and actions within their interpersonal relationships.

Further analysis revealed that several students had exceptionally high scores, indicating a deeper severity in toxic relationship issues. This underscores the presence of severe cases that require special attention. Conversely, some students scored lower, reflecting less severe experiences compared to their peers. Despite this, the presence of lower scores highlights the diverse levels of toxic relationship experiences among students. Categorizing these scores further revealed that most students fell into the medium category. This suggests that while the majority of students experienced moderate levels of toxic relationships, a few faced either high or low extremes.

After the intervention period, a post-test was conducted. The primary goal of the post-test was to compare the students' scores before and after receiving treatment. This comparison is essential to assess the effectiveness of behavioral counseling in mitigating the negative impacts of toxic relationships on the involved students. The analysis of data from both tests provides insights into the behavioral and emotional changes that may have occurred due to the given intervention.

The table shows the detailed pre-test and post-test scores, as well as the N-Gain values for each of the 10 students. The N-Gain is a measure of the improvement each student made, calculated as the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores, divided by the maximum possible improvement (i.e., the difference between the pre-test score and the highest possible score, typically 100).

Table 1. Pre-Test and Post-Test Results Data on Toxic Relationships

dent	Gender	Class	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	N-Gain
1	M	VIII-1	100	95	0.25
2	M	VIII-1	101	90	0.55
3	F	VIII-1	99	98	0.05
4	M	VIII-1	100	92	0.40
5	M	VIII-2	107	97	0.37
6	M	VIII-2	109	94	0.68
7	M	VIII-2	107	97	0.37
8	F	VIII-3	106	99	0.55
9	M	VIII-3	100	93	0.35
10	M	VIII-3	101	99	0.10

The data indicates that most students showed improvement post-intervention, although the degree of improvement varied. For instance, Student 2 and Student 8 both had substantial improvements, as reflected in their N-Gain scores of 0.55 each. On the other hand, Student 3 showed minimal improvement, with an N-Gain of 0.05, suggesting that the intervention was less effective for this student.

The data was collected using a questionnaire designed to assess the frequency and intensity of toxic relationship experiences among students. Each question aimed to understand various aspects of the students' interpersonal relationships that might be toxic, such as the frequency of conflicts, manipulative behaviors, or social isolation they experienced. The scores from this questionnaire were then processed to determine the severity of the problems faced by the students. This process involved statistical data processing to ensure the validity and reliability of the obtained results.

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of behavioral counseling in reducing the negative impacts of toxic relationships among students. The pre-test and post-test results, along with the calculated N-Gain scores, provide valuable insights into this. The majority of students showed positive changes in their scores, indicating that behavioral counseling helped them recognize and modify negative behaviors. This intervention facilitated improvements in their interpersonal relationships by providing them with tools and strategies to adopt healthier behaviors.

The results highlight the diverse levels of toxic relationship experiences among students and underscore the importance of tailored interventions. Behavioral counseling proved effective for most students, helping them develop healthier thought patterns and behaviors. The varied N-Gain scores suggest that while the intervention was generally successful, its effectiveness varied among individuals, indicating a need for personalized approaches in future applications. Overall, this study underscores the potential of behavioral counseling as a valuable tool in addressing the negative impacts of toxic relationships in educational settings.

The pre-test and post-test analysis revealed significant insights into the effectiveness of behavioral counseling. The variation in N-Gain scores among students indicates the complexity of addressing toxic relationships and the necessity for tailored approaches. Behavioral counseling showed promise in facilitating positive behavioral changes, helping students improve their interpersonal relationships. Future studies should focus on personalizing interventions to cater to individual needs more effectively. This study highlights the critical role of behavioral counseling in mitigating the adverse effects of toxic relationships among students, paving the way for healthier interactions and improved well-being in educational environments.

Table 2. Pre-Test and Post-Test Deviation Working Table Regarding the Influence of Behavioristic Counseling on Toxic Relationships

Siswa	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Graind (d) Pre Test-Post-Test	Xd (d-Md)	X ² d
1	100	95	5	-4,1	16,81
2	101	90	11	1,5	2,5
3	99	88	11	1,5	2,5
4	100	92	8	-1,5	2,25
5	107	97	10	0,5	0,25
6	109	94	15	5,5	30,25
7	107	97	10	0,5	0,25
8	106	95	11	1,5	2,25
9	100	93	7	-2,5	6,25
10	101	98	3	-8,5	72,25
N=10	1,030	939	Σd = 91	9,1	Σ ² d=135,56

The analysis results show that the first student had a pre-test score of 100, which dropped to 95 in the post-test, indicating a decrease of 5 points. This suggests a reduction in the level of toxic relationships, although not very significant. The second student showed a larger decrease from 101 in the pre-test to 90 in the post-test, with a reduction of 11 points, indicating a higher effectiveness of the counseling. This study also used statistical calculations to measure the extent of change between the pre-test and post-test. The 'Graind (d) Pre Test-Post-Test' values record the difference in scores between the two tests. For example, the third student also showed an 11-point decrease from an initial score of 99 to 88. This consistency indicates that the counseling had a significant impact in reducing toxic relationship behaviors.

The analysis of deviation from the median (Md), calculated from all the data, provided additional insights into the distribution of score changes among participants. For instance, the tenth student, who only showed a 3-point decrease from 101 to 98, had a large deviation (-8.5) from the median, indicating individual variations in response to the counseling.

The data shows an average decrease in scores from 1030 in the pre-test to 939 in the post-test, with a total overall score reduction of 91 points. This suggests that the behavioral counseling program was effective in reducing the level of toxic relationships among the students involved in the study.

Additionally, the 'Xd' and 'X2d' calculations, which are part of further statistical analysis, help identify individual variations in response to the intervention. Higher 'X2d' values indicate greater variation in score changes between individuals.

The study results show that behavioral counseling can be an effective tool in reducing toxic relationships among adolescents. Counseling helps students identify and change unhealthy behaviors, ultimately improving their social interactions. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of counseling can vary depending on various factors, including the frequency and depth of counseling sessions, as well as the students' openness and willingness to participate in the process.

Based on the t-test calculations, the obtained t-value was 7.459. When compared with the t-table value $(N-1) = 10-1 = 9$ with a significance level of $5\% = 2.262$, the calculated t-value of 7.459 is greater than the t-table value of 2.262. Thus, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted at the 5% significance level, indicating that this study is statistically significant.

The t-test analysis results show that the obtained t-value is 7.459. Based on the 5% significance level with degrees of freedom $(N-1) = 10-1 = 9$, the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected because the calculated t-value of 7.459 is greater than the t-table value of 2.262. This indicates that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, and the study is considered significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant influence of behavioral counseling on toxic relationships among eighth-grade students at SMPN 4 Mataram for the academic year 2023/2024.

The study conducted at SMPN 4 Mataram during the 2023/2024 academic year provided strong evidence of the effectiveness of behavioral counseling in reducing toxic relationship levels among eighth-grade students. Through a quantitative approach and the use of pre-tests and post-tests, this study successfully demonstrated a significant decrease in toxic behaviors, as measured by student survey scores. Behavioral counseling, which emphasizes behavior modification through environmental interactions, has proven to be an effective method for promoting positive social interactions and replacing negative behaviors with more adaptive ones (Kusuma & Sutapa, 2020).

The counseling intervention specifically addressed issues related to toxic relationships, where behavioral counseling played a crucial role in helping students recognize and change thought patterns and behaviors that could worsen their interpersonal conditions. Techniques such as Behavior Contracts and Aversion Therapy have been successfully used to alter behaviors like procrastination and lack of discipline among students, indirectly supporting the reduction of toxic behaviors (Hartati, 2023; Kuswoyo et al., 2021).

Emotional intelligence plays a key role in behavior modification and interpersonal interactions. In educational contexts, emotional intelligence significantly contributes to personal growth and social interactions, crucial aspects of behavioral counseling. This study shows that students who underwent behavioral counseling also experienced improvements in managing emotions, essential for handling and minimizing the effects of toxic relationships (Subagio, 2017; Utami & Novitasari, 2022).

Effective emotional intelligence enables individuals to regulate their emotions, leading to better decision-making and coping mechanisms. This study's results indicate that counseling helped increase students' awareness and understanding of the characteristics and impacts of toxic relationships, suggesting that the educational approach used was successful in enhancing students' readiness to handle such sensitive issues (Felix et al., 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the critical importance of emotional intelligence in navigating uncertainty, managing stress, and maintaining positive mental health. Interventions focusing on improving emotional intelligence in behavioral counseling can strengthen students' resilience against social and emotional pressures associated with toxic relationships (Kartikasari et al., 2023; Alam et al., 2022).

Integrating behavioral counseling techniques in education can effectively address various behavioral challenges students may face, including toxic relationships. This approach targets observable behaviors and provides structured interventions, promoting better learning independence and academic discipline among students (Imawati, 2021; Syafiq, 2022).

Further studies show that cognitive-behavioral counseling and creative counseling within the cognitive-behavioral modification framework have successfully reduced aggressive behaviors among

students. These findings support the results of this study, indicating that behavioral counseling can help develop more positive social behaviors and improve emotional regulation among adolescents (Gading et al., 2017; Karneli et al., 2019).

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) has shown promising results in reducing narcissistic personality disorders and improving emotional regulation, relevant to addressing toxic relationships. This suggests that behavioral counseling, focusing on behavioral and emotional adjustments, can effectively manage broader interpersonal issues (Wardani & Trisnani, 2022).

This study underscores the importance of implementing behavioral counseling in education to address toxic relationship issues. Engaging students in structured counseling and educating them about healthy relationship dynamics can significantly enhance their well-being and prepare them to face real-world relationship complexities. Thus, this study adds to the literature on the effectiveness of behavioral counseling and offers a practical framework for broader educational interventions.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the effectiveness of behavioristic counseling in reducing toxic relationship behaviors among eighth-grade students at SMPN 4 Mataram. Utilizing a One Group Pre-test Post-test design, the intervention showed significant improvements in students' behaviors, as evidenced by the substantial reduction in toxic relationship scores from pre-test to post-test. The analysis confirmed that behavioristic counseling, particularly through modeling techniques, effectively mitigates negative behaviors associated with toxic relationships. The statistical significance of the results, with a t-value of 7.459, underscores the intervention's impact. Therefore, behavioristic counseling can be considered a valuable tool in addressing and improving students' interpersonal relationships and overall mental health in educational settings.

RECOMMENDATION

To maximize the benefits of behavioristic counseling, it is recommended that educational institutions incorporate such programs to address and prevent toxic relationships among students. Regular counseling sessions can help students develop healthier social interactions and coping mechanisms. Additionally, future interventions should be personalized to meet the unique needs of each student. Tailoring counseling techniques to individual behavioral patterns and emotional responses can significantly enhance the effectiveness of the intervention. Finally, schools should invest in training programs for counselors to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively deliver behavioristic counseling. Continuous professional development will ensure that counselors stay updated with the latest techniques and approaches, further improving the support provided to students.

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