

## The impact of using existential therapy to build awareness of death for victims of bullying

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### Article History:

Received: 28/11/2022;  
Revised: 21/01/2023;  
Accepted: 18/02/2023;  
Published: 28/02/2023.

### How to cite:

Hengki Yandri<sup>1</sup>, Neviyarni<sup>2</sup>,  
Marjohan<sup>3</sup>, Ildil<sup>4</sup>, Afdal<sup>5</sup>. (2023).  
*The impact of using existential  
therapy to build awareness of  
death for victims of bullying.*  
*Terapeutik: Jurnal Bimbingan dan  
Konseling*, 6(3), pp. 369–378.  
DOI: 10.26539/terapeutik.631394



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**Abstract:** Bullying is a very troubling phenomenon in a society that occurs almost worldwide. Bullying has also penetrated the world of education, such as universities. This study aims to look at the impact of existential therapy in building awareness of death for bullies. The research method is experimental with a pretest and posttest design approach. The subjects of this study were active students in the odd semester of the 2021/2022 academic year at college X, and samples were taken with purposive sampling techniques totaling ten people. The data were revealed using a validated and tested bullying comprehension questionnaire. Descriptive data were processed using an interval formula to see the impact of existential therapy on building awareness of death for bullies who used Wilcoxon signed-rank tests. The results showed that only 30% of bullying respondents had a good understanding of awareness of death. After being given existential therapy, as many as 70% of bullying respondents already have a good understanding of awareness of death. This shows that the awareness of the death of bullies becomes better after being given existential therapy so that respondents no longer want to commit bullying acts. The researchers are further expected to develop a group guidance model with an existential therapy approach to prevent bullying in college students.

**Keywords:** existential therapy; awareness of death; bullying

**Abstrak:** Bullying merupakan fenomena yang sangat meresahkan masyarakat yang terjadi hampir di seluruh dunia. Bullying juga telah merambah dunia pendidikan seperti perguruan tinggi. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat dampak existential therapy dalam membangun awareness of death bagi pelaku bullying. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode eksperimen dengan pendekatan pre-test dan post-test design. Subjek penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa aktif pada semester ganjil tahun ajaran 2021/2022 pada perguruan tinggi X, sampel di ambil dengan teknik purposive sampling yang berjumlah 10 orang. Data tersebut diungkap menggunakan kuesioner pemahaman bullying yang telah divalidasi dan telah diuji keandalannya, kemudian data deskriptif diproses menggunakan rumus interval dan untuk melihat dampak penggunaan existential therapy untuk membangun awareness of death bagi pelaku bullying digunakan tes wilcoxon signed-rank. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa hanya 30% responden pelaku bullying yang memiliki pemahaman awareness of death yang baik. Setelah diberikan existential therapy, sebanyak 70% responden pelaku bullying sudah memiliki pemahaman awareness of death yang baik. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa awareness of death pelaku bullying menjadi lebih baik setelah diberikan existential therapy sehingga responden tidak memiliki keinginan lagi untuk melakukan tindakan bullying. Kepada para peneliti selanjutnya diharapkan untuk mengembangkan model bimbingan kelompok dengan pendekatan existensial therapy untuk mencegah perilaku bullying pada mahasiswa.

**Kata Kunci:** existential therapy; awareness of death; bullying

## Introductions

The phenomenon of bullying in society already shows a severe level of worry. We can see bullying behaviour happening around us as well as in news and information in the mass media, which is worse; this behaviour has occurred at all levels of human life, such as in the world of education, offices/work, society, and even in social institutions such as orphanages.

Bullying is an aggressive act carried out intentionally to hurt the victim with intensity repeatedly (Beane, 2008; Yandri et al., 2013). Then the actions of a person or group of people who suppress individuals who are considered weak are also a category of bullying (Colorosa, 2007; Ruswita et al., 2020)

Bullies usually launch their actions at individuals who are helpless or weak, both physically and psychically. Bullying experienced by victims of bullying will usually experience pressure both physically, mentally, and socially so the victim will tend to withdraw from the surrounding environment (Sujadi et al., 2021; Yandri, 2014). Many factors make bullying happen, such as a broken family environment and far from being harmonious (Juliawati, 2016; Papanikolaou et al., 2011), acts of violence and aggression behaviour (Malhi et al., 2014), peers and the media (Kartal et al., 2019; Ruswita et al., 2020), social media and online gaming (Pranawati, 2018), psychosocial pressure (Pengpid & Peltzer, 2013), inequality in economic strata (Azeredo et al., 2015).

Data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission revealed that in the span of a month-long period, from 2011 to 2019, there were 37,381 complaints of cases of violence against children. As for bullying cases in education and social media, there are 2,473 reports, and the trend shows an increase (KPAI, 2020). Then a study revealed that more than 50% of students had been victims of bullying both physically and non-physically (Dewi et al., 2016). There are still students who are bullied, such as being kicked, beaten, pinched, and “picked up”; in addition, the students experienced verbal intimidation in the form of fat, curly calls and other nicknames, ridiculed, insulted, and threatened or bullied or bullied (Aulia, 2016). Another study revealed that 31.9% of college students had experienced mild bullying behaviour (Wakhid et al., 2019).

Bullying behaviour has also entered the world of education, from elementary school to higher education. Bullying behaviour in higher education is mainly carried out by seventh-semester college students, with a percentage of 83.9%, and the type of bullying behaviour that is mainly carried out is verbal bullying, with a percentage of 73.5% (Putri & Silalahi, 2017). In carrying out their actions, bullying behaviour in college students has a mutually supportive role; of the 307 college students who were sampled by the study, 49% were bullies, 45% were bullying assistants, 52% were bullying followers, and 75% were bullying defenders (Hapsari & Purwoko, 2016). Then the bullying that occurs in the OSPEK activities of the new college students that appears the most is in the form of snapping and cursing profanity, as well as glaring at the new college students (Ningrum, 2018). Furthermore, the initial study at the research site showed indications of bullying behaviour, using a language style that estimates new college students in campus cultural activities.

One of the preventive measures that can be taken is providing counseling services to college students. Many counseling approaches can be used in serving college students to avoid bullying behaviour, such as the existential group's therapy approach. This approach was chosen because of the concept developed by Victor Frankl, who believed that the essence of being human lies in the search for meaning and purpose in life, while the goal of man's highest achievement is a life full of love (Corey, 2016, 2017). In the Qur'an surah Yunus verse 23, Allah says which means “... Hi human! Verily tyranny thy danger shall befall thyself; ...” (quran.kemenag.go.id, 2019); when there is a question of the meaning of God's word, then every deed we do must be held accountable, so we need to direct our behaviour towards excellent and responsible. Then the way we fill daily life with superficial conversations and routines shows that we often assume that we will live forever and can waste day after day

(Yalom, 1980). The existential group's therapy approach puts forward the central concept of human life that is realistic, consisting of the capacity for self-awareness, freedom, and responsibility; striving for identity and relationship to others; the search for meaning; anxiety as a condition of living; and awareness of death and nonbeing (Bartz, 2009; Corey, 2017; Yalom, 1980).

The concepts contained in the existential group's therapy will be able to change the client's view of himself, his environment, and the events that befell him into something meaningful (Deurzen & Adams, 2016) so that the client feels free from the shackles of suffering that squeeze him, the client will become a free and responsible human being in his own life. The use of group therapy has been tested to be effective in solving client problems (Oliseyenum, 2021; Prayitno, 2012). The results of previous research have also shown that existential therapy is effective in reducing hedonistic behaviour (Fitri et al., 2019), improving student self-exhibition (Indrayani et al., 2015), reducing student anxiety in determining the direction of specialization (Wijaya, 2014), increase self-esteem (Nanda et al., 2013), and addressing trauma to victims of bullying (Tambunan, 2021). Based on data exposure, literature review, and the results of previous research, the author is interested in analyzing the impact of existential group therapy in increasing college students' understanding of bullying behaviour

## Method

The research method is experimental with the one-group pretest-posttest design approach designed for one group and then given treatment to see the effects caused by the treatment (Sugiyono, 2013). The subjects in this study were active students of the Odd semester of 2021/2022 at college X, of which ten people were taken with purposive sampling techniques. The researcher developed the research instrument, which revealed the college student's understanding of bullying (Beane, 2008) and has been tested for validity and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.85). The instrument developed uses four alternative answers, namely strongly agree, not intended, and strongly disagree; an example of a research instrument statement item is "bullying is the act of intimidating weak people."

After the research data is collected, it is tabulated on the frequency distribution table so that it is easy to carry out analysis using descriptive statistics that are useful for revealing college students' understanding of bullying behaviour after the pretest and posttest. Then to see the comparison before with after being given treatment in the form of existential group therapy to college students, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test analysis tool was used with the help of SPSS 25.00.

## Result and Discussions

The research results showed an improvement in pretest and posttest conditions in 10 college students who participated in the existential group's therapy. The following is explained the data of the pretest results in table 1.

**Table 1.** Pretest Frequency Distribution

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Good	3	30%
Good Enough	1	10%

Bad	6	60%
	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

In table 1 above, you can see the results of measuring the scale of understanding bullying college students before being given existential therapy treatment showing that out of ten respondents, there are six respondents, or as many as 60%, who do not have a good understanding of bullying behaviour, one respondent or as many as 10% of respondents have begun to have a good understanding of bullying. As many as three or as many as 30% of respondents already understand bullying behaviour well. This means that the average respondent still does not have the correct insight into bullying behaviour in college.

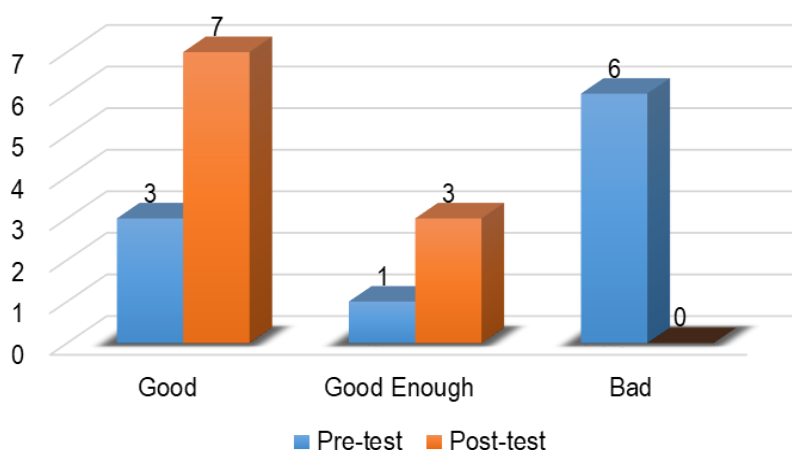
Furthermore, the impact of providing an existential therapy approach to build awareness of death for victims of bullying can be seen in table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Posttest Frequency Distribution

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Good	7	70%
Good Enough	3	30%
Bad	0	0
	<b>10</b>	<b>100%</b>

From table 2, it can be seen that the results of measuring the scale of understanding bullying college students after being given existential therapy treatment by building awareness of the death of bullying victims show an increase in understanding. Seven of the ten respondents to the study had a good understanding of bullying behaviour, or as many as 70% of respondents. There were as many as three respondents who had understood bullying behaviour enough. This means that the average respondent already has the proper insight into bullying behaviour in higher education.

Furthermore, to see a comparison of understanding bullying behaviour during the pretest and posttest can be seen in the following diagram:



**Diagram 1.** Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Data

From the diagram above, it can be seen that there is an increase in college students' understanding of bullying behaviour. This means that the condition of awareness of death in

bullying victims has been well formed after being given existential therapy to respondents. To prove whether there is a statistical difference, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test is carried out, which can be seen in table 3 below:

**Table 3.** Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

<b>Posttest - Pretest</b>	
Z	-2,805 <sup>b</sup>
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,005

In table 3 above, it can be seen that the value of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)  $0.005 < 0.05$  were less than the study's critical limit, meaning there is a meaningful difference between the pretest and posttest groups. This means that the awareness of the death of bullying victims becomes better after being given existential therapy so that the bullying victim students do not have the desire to carry out bullying actions.

The treatment given to students who were victims of bullying by utilizing an existential therapy approach to build awareness of death for victims of bullying was carried out in as many as six meeting sessions. Before being given treatment in the form of existential therapy to students victims of bullying, from the pretest results, it was revealed that the average respondent did not have a good understanding of bullying behaviour, so one of the things that need to be built on people who have problems like this is to build awareness of death (Yalom, 1980; Yalom & Leszcz, 2020).

The average victim of bullying has the same psychologist trauma, such as situational trauma, developmental trauma, intra-psycho trauma, and existential trauma (Tambunan, 2021), experiencing loneliness and sleep disturbances (Galih et al., 2022; Jomar et al., 2021), Self-efficacy disorders (Wibowo et al., 2021), withdrawn, quiet, insecure, stressed, feelings of fear, anxiety, pain, skipping classes, and dropping out of school (Aswat et al., 2022), psychosomatic problems such as abdominal pain, headaches even though physically there is nothing wrong in his body; The long-term impact is in the form of anxiety and panic disorder (Jalil et al., 2022), mental health disorders (Baams et al., 2021), feeling inferior (Alsawalqa, 2021), lack of life satisfaction and peace of life (Fauziyah & Rusmana, 2022; Ramos Salazar, 2021).

The trauma experienced by victims of bullying sometimes makes victims of bullying become bullies in the future (Nurdiana et al., 2021; Ramos Salazar, 2021; Waliyanti et al., 2018) This happens because the victim of bullying does not have much information about bullying itself (Alsawalqa, 2021), consider the act of bullying as humour (Alsawalqa, 2021; Burger, 2022; Dynel, 2021), So they think bullying behaviour is expected and has become a culture in their environment.

From the results of the research that has been presented, preventive measures against bullying victims so as not to become bullies need to be carried out, one of which is by conducting group counseling with an existential therapy approach. The existential therapy approach with a group format is seen as appropriate to solve the trauma problem of bullying victims because the main concepts of this approach are building the client's self-awareness, the client's freedom in living life, being responsible with his life, anxiety, creating the meaning of the client's life and building awareness of death in the client (Bartz, 2009; Corey, 2009; Kartianti & Asgar, 2021; Yalom, 1980, 2020).

The basic concept of building awareness of death in clients in the existential therapy approach can be understood by understanding death as crucial as finding meaning and purpose

in life. Life will have meaning precisely when we understand life must inevitably end, and the quality of life can be improved when we take the reality of our life (Corey, 2009; Yalom, 2020) seriously. Frankl (1985) believes that not how long we live but how we live determines the quality and meaningfulness of our lives. When we emotionally accept the reality of our mortality, we realize more clearly that our actions do count, that we have choices, and that we must accept the ultimate responsibility in determining how we live (Corey & Corey, 2013).

Statistically, the research results using the existential therapy approach have been proven to increase awareness of death in clients. This means that this approach can be used in tackling bullying behaviour in students. This is also proven by the results of previous research, which revealed that existential counseling could be used to overcome trauma in clients who are victims of bullying (Tambunan, 2021), reducing anxiety in the future (Sa'adah, 2020), improving the meaningfulness of the lives of people suffering from HIV-AIDS (Yulianti et al., 2020), reduces hedonic behaviour (Fitri et al., 2019), overcoming a situation of loneliness in LGBTQ+ Clients (Ratanashevorn & Brown, 2021), reducing bullying behaviour (Kartianti & Asgar, 2021), overcoming burnout syndrome (Ulrichová, 2012), reducing post-traumatic symptoms of stress disorder (Solgi & Ghazi, 2022), improves mental health (Malboeuf-Hurtubise et al., 2021), improves self-concept, social interaction and lowers anxiety (Modjo, 2021). From several previous research results, it is further strengthened that the existential therapy approach has been proven and tested in solving various client problems

## Conclusions

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The study's results revealed that before giving existential group therapy to college students, college students' understanding of bullying was still low; after college students carried out the existential group therapy, there was an increase in understanding in college students. So, existential group therapy can increase college students' understanding of bullying. So it is advisable for counselors in universities to apply existential group therapy to college students where they are in charge in order to reduce bullying behaviour that occurs among college students and for researchers are expected to develop a group guidance model with an existential therapy approach to prevent bullying behaviour in college students

## Acknowledgement

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Thank you to the supervisor of the dissertation planning course, namely Mrs Prof. Dr. Neviyarni S, M.S., Kons., Mr. Dr. Marjohan, M.Pd., Kons., Mr Prof. Ildil, S.Hl., S.Pd., M.Pd., P.hD., Kons., Mr Dr. Afdal, M.Pd., Kons., who provided direction and input related to this article.

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**Competing interests:**

The authors declare that they have no significant competing financial, professional or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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