



# The Effect of Group Counseling Using Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Techniques on Social Anxiety Among Students at MAS Darul Hikmah in Pekanbaru

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## Abstract

*This study is motivated by the high level of social anxiety among students, particularly in early adolescence, a period characterized by adaptation to new environments. Social anxiety that is not properly addressed can negatively impact students' self-confidence, social interactions, and academic achievement. Therefore, this study aims to determine the effect of applying Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) techniques in group counseling on reducing students' social anxiety at Darul Hikmah Islamic Senior High School Pekanbaru. This research employs a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental method with a one-group pre-test post-test design. The research subjects consist of 7 students selected through purposive sampling based on high levels of social anxiety. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. The results of the study indicate that before the treatment, most students were in the very high category of social anxiety. After the implementation of group counseling services using CBT techniques, there was a decrease in students' levels of social anxiety. This shows that Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) techniques have a significant effect in overcoming students' social anxiety. Based on the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, the Z value obtained is -2.103, and the asymp. sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.035, which is smaller than the significance level of 5% (0.05). Thus, CBT techniques in group counseling can be used as an effective alternative guidance and counseling service to help students reduce social anxiety.*

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a developmental period marked by complex biological, psychological, social, and emotional changes. During this phase, individuals are challenged to adapt to new environments, build healthy social relationships, and develop a positive self-identity. However, this adaptation process does not always go smoothly. Some adolescents experience various psychological barriers that make it difficult for them to interact with their social environment. One psychological problem commonly found among adolescents is *social anxiety* or social anxiety (Jatmiko, 2016)

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*Social anxiety* Social anxiety is a condition in which a person experiences excessive fear, anxiety, and worry when in social situations that require interaction with others. Individuals who experience social anxiety tend to feel uncomfortable when being the center of attention, fear negative judgment from those around them, and avoid various social situations that are perceived as threatening to their self-esteem (Putranto, 2016). This condition not only affects emotional aspects but also impacts an individual's ability to build interpersonal relationships, develop self-potential, and achieve optimal academic achievement.

According to Jatmiko (2016), individuals who experience *social anxiety* Often exhibit avoidance behavior in social situations due to fear of negative evaluation by others. This anxiety can manifest as excessive nervousness, fear of public speaking, difficulty communicating with peers, and even a tendency to withdraw from social settings. If this condition is not addressed appropriately, it can have various negative impacts on adolescents' psychological development.

Impact *social anxiety* can be seen in various aspects of life. Individuals experiencing social anxiety tend to have low self-confidence, are less able to express their opinions, have difficulty collaborating with others, and exhibit low motivation to learn. Furthermore, they often experience obstacles in developing their talents and potential due to fear of failure and negative judgment from those around them (Wulandari, 2024). In the long term, this condition can lead to adjustment disorders, difficulty building healthy social relationships, and even potentially develop into more serious psychological disorders.

Phenomenon *social anxiety* Social anxiety in adolescents is currently a concern for various parties due to its increasing prevalence. The United States National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reports that approximately 8% of adolescents aged 13-18 experience social anxiety, and this number continues to grow annually. Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the prevalence of social anxiety reaches approximately 15.8%, with adolescents being the most vulnerable group. Data from the Indonesia-National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS) shows that nearly 35% of Indonesian adolescents aged 10-17 experience mental health problems, and approximately 26.7% of them suffer from anxiety disorders (Nurvinkania & Sigarlake, 2022). These findings indicate that social anxiety is a real problem and requires serious attention from various parties, including educational institutions.

The school environment is one of the social contexts that greatly influences adolescent development. Schools serve not only as a place to acquire academic knowledge, but also as a means of developing character, social skills, and self-adjustment. Therefore, the presence of students experiencing *social anxiety* this can hinder their learning process and social development at school. This situation becomes even more complex when students are in a boarding school or Islamic boarding school environment, which demands higher levels of social adaptation skills than public schools.

In a boarding school environment, students are expected to live with peers from diverse backgrounds, follow strict rules, and adapt to new cultures and customs. This adaptation process often causes psychological stress for some students, especially those with low adaptive skills. As a result, many students experience social anxiety, have difficulty interacting with peers, feel uncomfortable in the school or dormitory environment, and exhibit a tendency to withdraw from social life.

A preliminary study conducted at MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru showed that social anxiety issues are quite common among students, particularly during the initial school years and during the adaptation period to the Islamic boarding school environment. Guidance and counseling teachers explained that many students come to the guidance and counseling room to consult about difficulties interacting with peers, fear of being in a new environment, feelings of discomfort when having to communicate with others, and a tendency to feel anxious when at school or in the dormitory. This condition indicates that

*social anxiety* is one of the psychological problems that requires systematic handling through guidance and counseling services in schools.

One approach that is considered effective in dealing with various anxiety problems is *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* (CBT). CBT is a counseling approach that focuses on the relationship between an individual's thoughts, emotions, and behavior. This approach assumes that maladaptive behaviors are often influenced by irrational thought patterns or cognitive distortions. Therefore, CBT seeks to help individuals identify, evaluate, and transform negative thought patterns into more realistic and adaptive ones (Beck, 2011).

According to Aaron T. Beck, CBT is a therapeutic approach designed to help individuals cognitively restructure irrational thoughts, resulting in more positive behavioral changes (Anugraha, 2024). Through this process, individuals are encouraged to recognize the relationship between their thoughts, feelings, and actions in everyday life. Thus, changes in cognitive aspects are expected to result in changes in emotional and behavioral aspects.

Previous studies have shown that CBT is effective in addressing various psychological problems, such as depression, anxiety, aggressive behavior, low self-efficacy, and various adjustment disorders (Rizky et al., 2023). In the context of social anxiety, CBT helps individuals identify negative beliefs that contribute to their fear of being judged by others and then replace them with more rational and constructive thought patterns. Through this process, individuals become better able to manage anxiety, increase self-confidence, and interact more effectively with their social environment.

The CBT approach in this study was implemented through group counseling services. Group counseling was chosen because it offers the advantage of utilizing group dynamics as a medium for behavior change. Through group interactions, students have the opportunity to share experiences, provide mutual support, learn from the experiences of other members, and develop social skills directly (Prayitno, 2005). Furthermore, a conducive group atmosphere can help students realize that they are not alone in facing their problems, thereby reducing feelings of isolation and increasing their courage to interact.

Previous studies have shown that CBT applied in group counseling is effective in reducing various forms of anxiety in students. Harisa (2021) found that implementing CBT in group counseling reduced exam anxiety in pencak silat students. Anugraha (2024) also reported that group counseling using CBT techniques had a positive effect on reducing social anxiety in junior high school students. These findings indicate that CBT has significant potential for application in the context of guidance and counseling services in schools.

However, research on the effectiveness of CBT in addressing *social anxiety* research on students in Islamic boarding schools is still relatively limited. However, the characteristics of Islamic boarding schools, which require high levels of social adaptation, can lead to different levels of social anxiety compared to public schools. Therefore, research on the application of group counseling services using CBT techniques to Islamic boarding school students is crucial to enrich the body of guidance and counseling knowledge and provide effective alternative services for guidance and counseling teachers in addressing students' social anxiety.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze the influence of the implementation of group counseling services using the technique *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* in overcoming *social anxiety* on students at MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru. This research is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of guidance and counseling studies, particularly regarding the management of social anxiety in adolescents, as well as provide practical contributions for guidance and counseling teachers in designing more effective, needs-based counseling services.

## METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach with the method quasi-experimental to test the effect of group counseling services with techniques Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) against social anxiety students. The research design used is One Group *Pre-test Post-test* Design, namely an experimental design that involves one research group that is given measurements before treatment (pretest), then given treatment in the form of group counseling services using CBT techniques, and then re-measurements were carried out after the treatment (posttest) (Sugiyono, 2019). The difference in scores between pretest and posttest used to determine the effectiveness of the treatment given.

The research was conducted at MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru in the odd semester of the 2025/2026 academic year. The study population was all 412 students at MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru. The research sample was selected using a random sampling technique. Purposive sampling, namely students who are identified as having a level of social anxiety High based on the results of the initial instrument distribution and recommendations from guidance and counseling teachers. Samples that met the criteria then participated in the entire series of group counseling services designed in the study. The research instrument used a questionnaire social anxiety which is compiled based on the social anxiety aspects put forward by Greca and Lopez, namely the fear of negative judgment (fear of negative evaluation), social avoidance and stress in new situations (social avoidance and distress in new situations), as well as social avoidance and stress in social situations in general (social avoidance and distress-general). Before use, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability to ensure its suitability as a research data collection tool.

Treatment was conducted through group counseling services using CBT techniques, conducted over several sessions. The service stages included formation, transition, core activities, and termination. In the core activities stage, participants were guided to identify negative thoughts that give rise to social anxiety, evaluate the rationality of these thoughts, and replace them with more positive and adaptive thought patterns. In addition, participants were given the opportunity to share experiences, receive feedback from group members, and practice developing more effective social behavior through group dynamics. The research data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive analysis was used to describe the level of social anxiety social anxiety students before and after treatment. Meanwhile, inferential analysis was conducted using the test paired sample t-test to determine the significance of the difference in scores pretest and posttest. All analyses were conducted at a significance level of 0.05. The test results were used to determine whether or not there was an influence of group counseling services using the technique Cognitive Behavior Therapy against the decline in the level social anxiety students at MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the effect of group counseling services using the technique *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy* (CBT) against *social anxiety* Students at MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru. Research data were obtained through questionnaire distribution. *Social anxiety* to students who were the research samples before (*pre-test*) and after (*post-test*) were given treatment in the form of group counseling services using CBT techniques.

### Social Anxiety Level Before Providing Group Counseling Services with CBT Techniques

Initial measurement results (*pre-test*) shows that the level of *social anxiety* students are still in the high and very high categories. Distribution of scores *social anxiety* before treatment can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Social Anxiety Before Treatment**

| Interval Shoes | Category    | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| >100           | Very high   | 6         | 85,71          |
| 84-99          | High        | 1         | 14,29          |
| 67-83          | High enough | 0         | 0              |
| 50-66          | Low         | 0         | 0              |
| <50            | Very Low    | 0         | 0              |
| <b>Amount</b>  |             | <b>7</b>  | <b>100</b>     |

*Source: Processed Research Data, 2025.*

Based on Table 1, it is known that of the 7 students who were respondents to the study, 6 students (85.71%) were in the very high category and 1 student (14.29%) was in the high category. There were no students in the fairly high, low, or very low categories. These results indicate that before being given group counseling services using the CBT technique, all respondents had a high level of anxiety. *Social anxiety* which is relatively high.

Next, the results *pre-test* based on aspects *social anxiety* measured in the study can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2. Students' Social Anxiety Scores Before Treatment**

| No            | Initials | Social Interaction | Social Avoidance | Physical and Emotional Reactions | Negative Feelings and Thoughts | Shoes      |
|---------------|----------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| 1             | APS      | 24                 | 20               | 29                               | 31                             | 104        |
| 2             | REP      | 24                 | 20               | 33                               | 38                             | 115        |
| 3             | DH       | 23                 | 12               | 28                               | 38                             | 101        |
| 4             | ZM       | 21                 | 17               | 30                               | 34                             | 102        |
| 5             | SQA      | 20                 | 18               | 22                               | 30                             | 90         |
| 6             | IS       | 24                 | 22               | 30                               | 34                             | 110        |
| 7             | DENTAL   | 21                 | 15               | 22                               | 35                             | 93         |
| <b>Amount</b> |          | <b>157</b>         | <b>124</b>       | <b>194</b>                       | <b>240</b>                     | <b>715</b> |

*Source: Processed Research Data, 2025.*

Table 2 shows that the total score *social anxiety* students before treatment was 715. The aspect that obtained the highest score was the negative feelings and thoughts aspect with a score of 240, followed by the physical and emotional reactions aspect of 194, the social interaction aspect of 157, and the social avoidance aspect of 124.

### **Social Anxiety Levels After Providing Group Counseling Services with CBT Techniques**

After implementing group counseling services using CBT techniques, re-measurements were carried out (*post-test*) to find out the changes in the level *social anxiety* students. The results of the distribution of the level of *social anxiety* after treatment can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Social Anxiety After Treatment**

| Interval Shoes | Category    | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| >100           | Very high   | 2         | 28,57          |
| 84–99          | High        | 2         | 28,57          |
| 67–83          | High enough | 3         | 42,86          |
| 50–66          | Low         | 0         | 0              |
| <50            | Very Low    | 0         | 0              |
| <b>Amount</b>  |             | <b>7</b>  | <b>100</b>     |

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025.

Based on Table 3, there is a change in the level of *social anxiety* Students after participating in group counseling services using CBT techniques. The number of students in the very high category decreased from 6 to 2. Three students were in the moderately high category, and two students were in the high category. *post-test* based on aspects *social anxiety* presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Students' Social Anxiety Scores After Treatment**

| No            | Initials | Social Interaction | Social Avoidance | Physical Emotional Reactions | and Negative Feelings Shoes and Thoughts |            |
|---------------|----------|--------------------|------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1             | APS      | 13                 | 13               | 21                           | 19                                       | 66         |
| 2             | REP      | 16                 | 16               | 24                           | 23                                       | 79         |
| 3             | DH       | 23                 | 15               | 28                           | 36                                       | 102        |
| 4             | ZM       | 22                 | 16               | 27                           | 31                                       | 96         |
| 5             | SQA      | 19                 | 19               | 21                           | 26                                       | 85         |
| 6             | IS       | 23                 | 22               | 29                           | 37                                       | 111        |
| 7             | DENTAL   | 14                 | 13               | 21                           | 20                                       | 68         |
| <b>Amount</b> |          | <b>130</b>         | <b>114</b>       | <b>171</b>                   | <b>192</b>                               | <b>607</b> |

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025.

Based on Table 4, the total score *social anxiety* The post-treatment score for students was 607. Compared to the pre-treatment score of 715, there was a 108-point decrease. The decrease was seen across all measured aspects, namely social interaction, social avoidance, physical and emotional reactions, and negative feelings and thoughts.

**Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis testing was carried out using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test to determine the differences in the levels of *social anxiety* students before and after being given group counseling services using CBT techniques.

**Table 5. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test**

| Variables            | WITH   | Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) |
|----------------------|--------|------------------------|
| Pre-test – Post-test | -2,103 | 0,035                  |

Source: SPSS Research Output, 2025.

The analysis results show an Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.035. This value is smaller than the significance level of 0.05 ( $0.035 < 0.05$ ). Thus, there is a significant difference between the scores *pre-test* and *post-test social anxiety* students after participating in group counseling services with techniques *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* (CBT).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study showed that before being given group counseling services using the technique *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* (CBT), level *social anxiety* MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru students are in the high and very high categories. This finding can be seen from the results *pre-test* which shows that 85.71% of students are in the very high category and 14.29% are in the high category. The high level of *social anxiety* This indicates that students experience difficulties in social interactions, tend to avoid certain social situations, and experience various physical and emotional reactions when faced with social environments. Furthermore, negative feelings and thoughts scored highest compared to other aspects. These results suggest that the primary source of students' social anxiety stems from negative ways of thinking about themselves and the social situations they encounter.

These findings align with Beck's theory that emotional and behavioral disorders are generally rooted in cognitive distortions or irrational thought patterns. Individuals with social anxiety tend to hold negative beliefs about being judged negatively by others, making mistakes when speaking, or experiencing rejection in social interactions. These negative thoughts then trigger emotional responses such as fear, anxiety, shame, and a lack of self-confidence, ultimately leading individuals to avoid various social situations (Beck, 2011). In the context of this study, high scores on the negative feelings and thoughts aspect indicate that students still hold many irrational beliefs that influence their social behavior.

This condition is also in accordance with the characteristics *social anxiety* as put forward by Greca and Lopez which includes fear of negative evaluation (*fear of negative evaluation*), social avoidance and stress in new situations (*social avoidance and distress in new situations*), as well as social avoidance and stress in social situations in general (*social avoidance and distress-general*). Students who experience social anxiety generally feel afraid when having to speak in front of their friends, feel uncomfortable when being the center of attention, and show a tendency to withdraw from social environments. These symptoms were found in students who were respondents in the study based on the results of observations, interviews, and measurements using questionnaires *social anxiety*. After being given group counseling services using CBT techniques, there was a change in the level of *social anxiety* on students. Results *post-test* the results showed that the number of students in the very high category decreased from six to two. In addition, three students were in the moderately high category. Overall, there was a decrease in scores. *Social anxiety* from 715 to 607, a decrease of 108 points. This decrease indicates that group counseling services using CBT techniques can help students reduce their social anxiety.

Decrease in level *social anxiety* This can be explained through the basic principles of CBT, which focus on the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behavior. In group counseling, students are encouraged to identify various negative thoughts that arise in social situations. Next, they are guided to evaluate the validity of these thoughts and replace them with more rational and adaptive ones. This process is known as *cognitive restructuring* or cognitive restructuring. According to Beck (2011), changes in cognitive aspects will influence changes in emotional and behavioral aspects. When individuals are able to change their way of thinking to be more positive, their level of anxiety will also decrease. In addition to being influenced by the cognitive restructuring process, the success of the intervention is also supported by the use of group counseling services as a medium for

implementing CBT. Group counseling allows students to gain direct social learning experiences through interactions with other group members. During the activity, students have the opportunity to share experiences, express feelings, receive feedback, and learn from the experiences of other group members facing similar issues. The group dynamics that develop during the counseling process help students realize that they are not alone in facing social anxiety. This condition can gradually increase students' self-confidence and courage in social interactions (Prayitno, 2005).

When viewed based on the measured aspects, the largest decrease in scores occurred in the negative feelings and thoughts aspect. Before treatment, this aspect scored 240, and after treatment, it dropped to 192. These results indicate that CBT techniques successfully addressed the root cause of students' social anxiety, namely the negative thought patterns that had dominated their perceptions of themselves and their social environment. This finding reinforces CBT's fundamental assumption that cognitive change is key to reducing emotional disturbances and maladaptive behaviors.

The results of this study are in line with Harisa's research (2021) which found that the implementation of *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* Group counseling services are effective in reducing student anxiety levels. The study showed that students who participated in CBT-based group counseling experienced improved ability to manage negative thoughts and showed a significant reduction in anxiety symptoms. The findings of this study also support the findings of Nugraha, Imaddudin, and Mudzakkir (2024), which concluded that group counseling using CBT techniques can reduce adolescent social anxiety through cognitive restructuring and social skill development.

The effectiveness of group counseling services using CBT techniques in this study was also demonstrated through the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, which showed a significance value of 0.035. This value is smaller than the 0.05 significance level, indicating a significant difference between the scores *pre-test* and *post-test*. Thus, the research hypothesis states that group counseling services with group counseling techniques *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* have an impact on the decline *social anxiety* students can be accepted. These findings show that CBT is an effective counseling approach to help students overcome social anxiety, especially in Islamic boarding school environments that require high levels of adaptability and social interaction. Overall, the results of the study indicate that group counseling services using this technique *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* It can help students recognize and change negative thought patterns, improve their ability to adapt, reduce social avoidance behavior, and increase their courage in interacting with their surroundings. Therefore, CBT-based group counseling services can be used as an alternative, effective guidance and counseling service in addressing these issues. *Social anxiety* to students.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that group counseling services with group counseling techniques *Cognitive Behavior Therapy* (CBT) has a significant effect in reducing the level of *social anxiety* students at MAS Darul Hikmah Pekanbaru. Before being given treatment, most of the students were in the category *social anxiety* Very high levels of anxiety are characterized by a high level of fear of negative judgment, a tendency to avoid social interactions, the emergence of physical and emotional reactions when in social situations, and the dominance of negative feelings and thoughts. After participating in group counseling services using CBT techniques, there was a decrease in the level of anxiety. *Social anxiety* in all measured aspects, as indicated by a decrease in the total score from 715 to 607 and a decrease in the number of students in the very high category. The results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test with a significant value prove that there is a significant difference between the conditions before and after treatment. These findings indicate that the implementation of CBT through group counseling is effective in helping students identify and change negative thought patterns, improve self-adjustment skills, reduce social avoidance behavior, and increase courage in interacting with their social environment, so it can be recommended as one of the guidance and counseling

service strategies to overcome *social anxiety* to students.

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