

Application of Client-Centered Theory Using Positive Regard (Acceptance) Techniques to Manage Anxiety in Students Who Are Studying While Working

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ABSTRACT

Students who work while studying often experience anxiety and difficulty in managing time, which hurts their learning outcomes and emotional well-being. This study aims to understand the initial state of the counselee, the process of applying therapy, and the impact of applying Client-Centered Theory with Positive Regard (Acceptance) techniques in managing the anxiety of these students. This research uses a qualitative approach with observation, documentation, and interview methods, and the type of case study research. The results showed positive changes in the counselee after therapy, including improvements in positive affirmations, emotional management, and social interactions. The counselee began to smile more often, take a deep breath, worship more diligently, and show improvement in interacting with family. In conclusion, applying Client-Centered Theory with Positive Regard (Acceptance) techniques effectively manages the anxiety of students who study while working. This therapy helps counselees to accept themselves, think positively, and improve emotional and social well-being. It is hoped that the counselee will continue to remember Allah as a source of strength and understand that everything happens by His will, including the challenges faced.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The issues raised in this study are crucial as they relate to the challenges faced by students who study while working (Fook & Sidhu, 2015; Pedroso et al., 2022). This phenomenon not only impacts their learning outcomes but also their psychological well-being, especially anxiety levels that can affect academic performance and life balance (Etherton et al., 2022; Hanson et al., 2016; Malak et al., 2022; Morales-Rodríguez et al., 2020). This research adopts a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiences and changes experienced by university students in managing their anxiety.

Several studies reveal that the application of Client-Centered Techniques is effective in overcoming various psychological problems. Research by (Masrukhin & Musfiroh, 2021) shows that this therapy is effective against aggressive behavior of high school students, while (Lestari & Nurjannah, 2022) found that this technique helps overcome anxiety in facing divorce. (Nurdahlia, 2022) revealed that the cognitive paradigm in the Client-Centered approach facilitates individual understanding in the context of Islamic education and broadens thinking horizons. Meanwhile, Dian Retno (Ningsih, 2019) showed that this approach is suitable for overcoming adolescent self-concept problems, and Cindani (Kusuma, 2020) found that this therapy was effective in reducing depression levels in adult subjects. This phenomenon shows that the client-centered approach can be applied in various contexts to overcome different psychological problems. However, previous research has highlighted the importance of formal education and work experience for university students but has not gone into enough detail on how anxiety management can be improved through specific counseling approaches such as Client Centered Theory with Positive Regard (Acceptance) techniques. This limitation grounds the need for in-depth research in this context. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring the effectiveness of the Client-Centered approach in managing anxiety in college students who study while working, thus making a significant contribution to the field of counseling and education.

The primary objective of this study is to examine how the application of Client-Centered Theory with Positive Regard (Acceptance) techniques can assist college students who study while working on managing their anxiety. This study distinguishes itself from previous research by offering practical contributions to the development of more effective counseling strategies for students facing the challenges of balancing academic and professional responsibilities. Rather than testing specific hypotheses, this research aims to provide an in-depth exploration and description of the experiences of the study participants.

The central focus is on the transformations in students' approaches to managing and responding to anxiety following counseling interventions that incorporate targeted therapeutic techniques. A qualitative research design was adopted to facilitate a comprehensive and contextual understanding of this phenomenon, without the constraint of statistical generalization. Through this approach, the study seeks to offer deeper insights into the effectiveness of the proposed counseling strategies.

2. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach that aims to understand the phenomena experienced by the research subject thoroughly by describing it in the form of words or language in a certain natural context. This method seeks to capture the meaning, motivation, and experience of individuals in real situations, thus providing a rich and in-depth picture of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 2012). Various scientific methods are used in this process, including observation, documentation, and direct experience. Observation allows the researcher to see and record behaviors, interactions, and events directly in the subject's natural environment. Documentation involves collecting and analyzing various relevant documents, such as notes, reports, and other artifacts that can provide additional information about the phenomenon. Direct experience involves

the personal involvement of the researcher in the situation under study to gain understanding from a first-person perspective.

The type of research used in this study is a case study, which is an in-depth study of a research subject with specific information covering the entire background of the problem. Case studies provide a detailed analysis of one or more subjects in a particular context, allowing researchers to identify and understand the factors that influence the phenomenon. This research is conducted in detail and covers various aspects relevant to the background and context of the subject, to provide deep and comprehensive insights. Through this approach, researchers can explore and analyze data holistically, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study and its implications in a broader context.

The data collection techniques in this study are observation, interview, and documentation. Observation is a systematic observation of the phenomenon being studied. In this study, observations were made to pay attention to the condition of the counselee through verbal and non-verbal expressions, the environment where the counselee lived, the counselee's daily activities, as well as the process before, during, and after therapy. The interview is a data collection method that involves a direct or indirect oral question-and-answer process. In this study, interviews were conducted with the child, family, neighbors, people close to the counselee, and the counselee herself. Interview topics included the identity of the counselee, the condition of the counselee, and the problems faced by the counselee. Documentation is a data collection technique that involves retrieving information from documents, photographs, handwriting, or other works. At this stage, researchers collect documentation in the form of photos of the counselee's daily activities and the process of implementing therapy.

The data analysis in this study was conducted systematically to evaluate the effectiveness of Client-Centered Therapy incorporating Positive Regard techniques in alleviating anxiety among college students. Data were collected through observation, interviews, and documentation, which were then systematically organized and analyzed to compare the counselees' conditions before and after therapy. Observations captured behavioral patterns and emotional responses, interviews provided insights into the counselees' experiences and perceptions, and documentation supplemented the findings with additional contextual information.

This study specifically examines the implementation of Positive Regard in Client-Centered Therapy and its impact on the counselees' anxiety levels. By analyzing pre- and post-therapy data, the study assesses emotional changes, the nature of interactions with the counselor, and variations in anxiety levels. The findings of this analysis are expected to contribute to the refinement of counseling techniques, providing valuable insights for practitioners in effectively supporting students in managing anxiety.

Research Phase

Pre-Field Stage: This stage is used to obtain a global description of the research subject which will ultimately result in a research plan for the researcher. The stages start from preparing a research design, choosing a research field, taking care of licensing, recognizing the environment, selecting informants, preparing research equipment, and understanding research ethics.

Field Work Stage 1) Researchers conducted interviews with the counselee, family, neighbors, and people who had been close to the counselee. 2) Applying client-centered therapy with positive regard to foster self-confidence in students, 3) Observing the counselee before, during, and after the therapy process.

Data Analysis Stage: The Data Analysis Stage involves researchers in answering the questions posed in the problem formulation, as well as summarizing the findings that have been understood.

Reporting Stage: The Reporting Stage is a process in which the researcher compiles a report that includes all steps from beginning to end, based on the data that has been collected during the research.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Description of the Client-Centered Therapy Process for Enhancing Self-Confidence and Self-Love in Students

Problem Identification

Every individual encounters challenges, each accompanied by a potential solution. In Islamic teachings, it is emphasized that difficulties are always accompanied by ease, as stated in Surah Al-Insyirah (94:5–6). This perspective reinforces the idea that every problem has a resolution, often facilitated through support from others, as human beings are inherently social creatures who rely on interpersonal connections.

M. Umam (pseudonym) is an undergraduate student in the Islamic Community Development program at the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya. He faces difficulties in balancing academic responsibilities with his job, which frequently results in missed lectures. This issue is exacerbated by delays in receiving Google Meet links from lecturers, causing heightened anxiety and cognitive overload, which, in turn, affects his physical and psychological well-being. Determined not to burden his parents financially, Umam works to support his own needs.

The researcher identified the need for an appropriate therapeutic intervention to help alleviate Umam's anxiety. Residing in Ngampel Village, Gresik Regency, Umam is the eldest of three siblings. From a young age, he was determined to be independent, believing that his younger siblings required greater financial support for their education. Having secured admission to a public university through an invitation-based selection process, he committed himself to academic success through personal effort. However, by the fourth semester, he began struggling with time management and financial constraints, leading to excessive anxiety and thoughts of discontinuing his studies.

Despite his struggles, Umam refrained from discussing his difficulties with his parents, fearing that he would disappoint them. Instead, he endeavored to maintain punctuality and discipline, ultimately experiencing emotional and physical exhaustion. Observations revealed that Umam exhibited introverted tendencies, struggled to integrate into his social environment, and was hesitant to engage in deep interpersonal interactions with his own family. This sense of isolation further contributed to his distress and discomfort in social settings.

In this case, the counselee named Umam is a close friend of the researcher, making it easier for researchers to identify his problems well because his house is not far from the researcher's place. The researcher's first step is to build a good relationship with Umam so that he feels comfortable during the assessment process. During the first meeting at Umam's boarding house, the researcher visited to stay in touch, tried to chat with Umam often, and asked permission to accompany him when he gave. Umam's positive response showed that Umam felt lonely because he lived alone in the boarding house after previously living with his family since childhood.

Umam had lived with his family, but when he entered college, he had to live alone in the boarding house because he wanted to avoid inconveniencing his parents and find his income to support the expensive education costs of his younger siblings. Although he did not complain about the conditions of studying while working, Umam recently felt depressed and stressed living a monotonous life routine and had difficulty managing his time. Observations and interviews by researchers revealed that Umam was active from morning to night, and often felt low back pain due to the heavy workload. In addition, researchers visited Umam's relatives' homes to obtain permission and better understand Umam's life. Umam used to live with his family, but when he entered college, he had to live alone in a boarding house because he wanted to avoid inconveniencing his parents and earn his income to support his younger siblings' expensive

education. Although he did not complain about the conditions of studying while working, later Umam felt depressed and stressed living a monotonous life routine and had difficulty managing his time. Observations and interviews by researchers revealed that Umam was active from morning to night, and often felt low back pain due to the heavy workload. In addition, researchers visited Umam's relatives' homes to obtain permission and better understand Umam's life. Umam's sister, Mrs. Fida, is a cake maker for celebrations and rarely communicates with Umam due to her busy work schedule. Nonetheless, the researcher learned that Umam often daydreamed and smoked excessively according to her sister's confession.

Umam's brother once offered Umam to live together in his house, but Umam preferred to live alone in the boarding house because he felt more comfortable and did not want to trouble his brother. Mrs. Fida has a son who is still in junior high school, and Umam's cousin who was interviewed also confirmed that he rarely spent time with Umam because he felt uncomfortable. Mrs. Fida often told her son to accompany Umam because she felt that Umam lacked friends to share stories with.

Diagnosis

After completing the problem identification process, the researcher seeks to diagnose the problems faced by the counselee. The aim is to identify the problems faced by the counselee and their underlying causes or factors. Based on data obtained from previous interviews and observations, the counselee experienced anxiety and a lack of self-acceptance caused by difficulties in managing time and finances. This condition of anxiety and lack of self-acceptance makes the counselee feel less grateful for the blessings given by Allah SWT, and lately, he often complains about his problems.

Prognosis

Following the completion of the diagnostic stage, the next step is prognosis. Prognosis involves determining the appropriate form of intervention to support the counselee in addressing their issues. After identifying the problem and analyzing the counselee's diagnosis, the researcher opted to implement client-centered therapy utilizing the Positive Regard (Acceptance) Technique. The selection of this therapeutic approach was made based on careful consideration of its applicability and effectiveness.

Client-centered therapy is a specialized branch of humanistic therapy that prioritizes the client's subjective and phenomenal experience. This approach strongly emphasizes the client's capacity to take an active role in the therapeutic process and to identify their own path toward personal change. The therapeutic relationship between the therapist and the client is considered a crucial catalyst for facilitating meaningful transformation. The client-centered counseling model underscores the client's ability to recognize key issues in their life and to independently develop solutions to their concerns. The fundamental principles underpinning the client-centered approach include the concept of self, self-actualization, personality theory, and the nature of anxiety. Carl Rogers, a pioneer of client-centered therapy, proposed that the core focus of counseling lies in the client's self-concept and personal growth.

The researcher selected this therapeutic approach based on the following considerations. First, the client is deemed capable of taking responsibility for their actions, resolving issues, and determining an appropriate course of action for their well-being. Second, this therapy prioritizes the client's subjective experience. Through empathy and understanding, the therapist facilitates self-exploration by focusing on the client's perception of themselves and their worldview. Third, client-centered therapy is founded on the principle that psychological growth and development originate from within the individual. Therapeutic change occurs through the counselor-client relationship, reinforcing that healing is a collaborative process rather than an isolated endeavor. Fourth, the success of the therapy is influenced by genuineness, warmth, unconditional acceptance, and

accurate empathy demonstrated by the therapist. Finally, client-centered therapy is not merely a collection of techniques but is deeply rooted in shared values and beliefs. Throughout the therapeutic process, both therapist and client engage in a mutual journey of exploration and growth, emphasizing the humanistic essence of psychological counseling.

On the other hand, the researcher will show unconditional positive regard by always accepting the counselee for who they are and providing support and concern for all that the client is experiencing. The counselor will express positive feelings to the client, offer reassurance, and listen actively with responsive eye contact and positive body language, to show engagement in the session. By creating a climate of unconditional positive acceptance, a counselor can help clients feel comfortable in expressing their emotions without fear of rejection. This experience is often reinforcing and opens up opportunities for clients to make positive changes.

The main goal of person-centered counseling is to bring clients back into their feelings life and encourage them to find an authentic self-identity. This goal includes helping clients to allow uninhibited expression of their feelings, and to symbolize their experiences into a more mature self-concept. In other words, helping clients develop their feelings of self to the fullest so that it is broader, adequate, and appropriate to their organismic experience. This allows clients to become more congruent, authentic, and open, as well as able to cope with problems independently, take control of their own lives, function more efficiently, and increase their self-confidence. In short, the goal is to help clients reach their full personal potential and function optimally. Typical traits of a fully functioning individual include: (1) openness to experience, (2) existential living, (3) trust in organismic experience, (4) freedom, and (5) creativity.

Treatment

This is the phase where the researcher has made a prognosis or determined the type of assistance to be provided. The main problem that arises is "How can researchers create effective interpersonal relationships?", "what conditions and conditions can support the client's personal development?", or more simply, "What are the techniques for building effective interpersonal relationships?". To answer this question, by the concept of person-oriented, there are three main variables as conditions, conditions, or basic techniques in an effective and constructive counseling process for optimal personality change, namely:

The counselor must be congruent and integrated in his/her relationship. That is, the counselor must be able to have the courage to present himself as genuine, authentic, genuine, honest, innocent, sincere, spontaneous, open, earnest, and integrated with his partner (client) so that the client feels accepted as a person as he is. The appearance in the relationship must be seen, accepted, realized, believed, and assimilated by the client.

There is unconditional positive regard for the client by the counselor, which means there is an attitude of acceptance, sympathetic attention, respect, and appreciation for children with special needs and the problems they experience. This appreciation is nothing but a manifestation of basic trust, namely that children can be trusted because in their personalities there are many possibilities of potential and positive feelings that are still hidden, as well as a form of tolerance for their various limitations. Respect is essentially needed to create a sense of security to build a warm, loving climate that is conducive to changes in the client's personality, and to invite the child to accept themselves as they are.

The counselor's ability to empathically understand the child's inner world of experience is essential. Understanding empathically means that the counselor tries to feel and understand the child's psychological condition to help the child realize and change himself. The counselor must be able to enter into the child's world of feelings by listening with an open and attentive heart, recognizing and feeling affectively and cognitively the child's existential experience as felt by the child, and having the sensitivity to express things indirectly but clearly, sharply, and easily understood by the child. This empathic ability is important to help the child overcome feelings of

isolation, strengthen self-esteem and self-confidence, strengthen the child's understanding of his or her experiential world, focus on the emotional aspects of the child's experience, and help overcome barriers that hinder the expression of the child's experience. Although important, the counselor must maintain a balance and keep an appropriate distance so as not to get too emotionally involved and lose identity in the role of a guide for the child.

Evaluation

After passing the treatment or therapy stage, the researcher evaluates the counselee by paying attention to changes that occur before, during, and after Client-centered therapy is carried out. This evaluation aims to assess how successful the treatment carried out by the client-centered therapy. The evaluation results show that the counselee has experienced significant changes; now the counselee feels able to manage time better, does not feel anxious when alone, and feels calmer after undergoing Client-centered therapy with positive reinforcement.

In addition, the researcher advised the counselee to do positive affirmations in each of his activities independently when the counselee felt less self-accepting. Researchers conduct follow-ups to monitor the long-term development of the counselee, provide assistance, and assist the counselee in overcoming anxiety. The follow-up is to encourage the counselee to do Client Centered therapy at any time, either after *fardu* prayers or while relaxing in bed. Consumers are encouraged to undergo this therapy consistently and *istiqomah*.

Here is a table that summarizes the results of your research on Client-Centered therapy to foster an attitude of trust and self-love in college students:

Table 1. Client-Centered Therapy to foster self-confidence and self-love

Stages	Description
Problem Identification	Umam, an undergraduate student at UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, had difficulty managing his time between studies and work, causing excessive anxiety, physical and mental fatigue, and a lack of social interaction. He did not want to be a burden to his parents and was trying to be financially independent, but began to experience high emotional distress.
Diagnosis	Umam experienced anxiety and a lack of self-acceptance due to difficulties in managing time and finances. This condition made him less grateful and complain frequently, which impacted his mental and physical health.
Prognosis	To overcome his problems, Client-Centered therapy with Positive Regard (Acceptance) techniques was applied. This approach emphasizes the client's subjective experience and supports him in finding solutions independently with the guidance of the counselor.
Treatment	The counselor builds an effective relationship with Umam through: 1. Congruence: The counselor shows authenticity and openness in interactions with clients. 2. Unconditional Positive regard: The counselor accepts Umam as he is, provides support, and creates a safe environment. 3. Empathy: The counselor understands Umam's inner experiences and helps him recognize and accept his emotions.
Evaluation	After the therapy, Umam experienced positive changes, such as being able to manage his time better, feeling calmer, and less anxious when alone. He was also encouraged to do positive affirmations and undergo therapy independently to maintain his emotional stability.
Follow-up	The counselor conducts follow-ups to monitor Umam's development in the long term, provide assistance, and ensure that the therapy techniques are consistently applied in daily life.

Discussion

The research findings show that a client-centered approach with a focus on acceptance has a significant impact on students. In this analysis, we see that students showed a marked improvement in their ability to manage anxiety better. This was reflected in changes in positive mindsets and behaviors, such as improvements in self-affirmation and the ability to handle stress more effectively through breathing techniques and self-reflection.

The scientific interpretation of these findings highlights that acceptance is a key factor in overcoming anxiety. By accepting themselves and the situations they face, students become better able to change the way they interact with the challenges they face, thus reducing the negative impact of anxiety on their well-being (Franzen et al., 2021; Lahtinen et al., 2023).

These findings are consistent with existing literature on the effectiveness of client-centered approaches in different contexts. Previous research, such as that conducted by (Lestari & Nurjannah, 2022) in addressing divorce-related anxiety, suggests that this approach is not only relevant but also effective in responding to a range of complex psychological problems. This confirms that the client-centered approach is widely applicable and reliable in helping individuals overcome their emotional challenges.

The implications of these findings provide valuable insights for counseling and psychotherapy practitioners in developing more specific intervention strategies for college students facing multiple stresses (Justin M. H. Salisbury, 2021; Sholihah & Ningsih, 2024). By deepening the understanding of the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of the client-centered approach, future research can further explore the application and adaptation of this approach in different contexts, including student populations in other institutions or different career situations (Kalamar et al., 2023).

Overall, this study shows that applying client-centered theory with positive regard (acceptance) techniques is effective in managing anxiety in UINSA students who are studying while working. With a focus on self-acceptance and positive emotional support, this therapy provides significant benefits for the psychological well-being of the counselee. The findings not only provide practical contributions for counselors in equipping themselves with more effective strategies but also expand our understanding of ways to better support college students in dealing with their psychological challenges.

Client-Centered in helping students overcome anxiety Islamic Education Perspective

Self-confidence is a fundamental element in individual development, especially in Islamic education which emphasizes the balance between intellectual, spiritual, and emotional aspects (Abidin & Sirojuddin, 2024; Agustin & Kistoro, 2024; Akbar, 2019; Arifin et al., 2022; Fathurrochman et al., 2019). In Islam, self-confidence is not just a sense of confidence in one's abilities but is also closely related to belief in Allah's destiny and submission to Him (Bénabou & Tirole, 2002; Lubis et al., 2022). This belief plays an important role in shaping individual character to be better prepared to face life's challenges with optimism and calmness (Hasanah et al., 2024).

The results of research on the application of Client-Centered Therapy in helping students overcome anxiety show that this approach has a significant impact on increasing self-confidence. In this therapy, the concept of Positive Regard (Acceptance) plays a major role in building self-acceptance (Hamzah et al., 2020). Through this process, individuals who experience anxiety and academic pressure begin to rediscover faith in themselves. They no longer feel burdened by too high standards but rather accept their condition with a more positive and conscious attitude.

From the perspective of Islamic education, healthy self-confidence is part of the process of *tazkiyatun nafs*, which is the purification of the soul that brings individuals to the awareness of the potential given by Allah. QS. Al-Baqarah (2:286) teaches that Allah does not burden a person with anything.

The therapy provided in this study also showed that with unconditional positive regard from the counselor, individuals who previously experienced anxiety began to feel more valued. They experienced an increase in gratitude and found more effective ways of managing academic and work pressures. The reflection process conducted in therapy helped them understand that every challenge faced is part of life's journey that can be overcome with maximum effort and sincere prayer.

In the context of Islamic education, the results of this study have broad implications, especially in building a supportive environment for students (Basir et al., 2024). Islam teaches the importance of *ukhuwah* or brotherhood in building self-confidence, where support from friends, family, and mentors can be a major factor in strengthening one's mentality. In addition, the habituation of positive affirmations as taught by the Prophet Muhammad is also an important factor in forming a healthy and optimistic mindset (Dimiyati et al., 2021; Tabroni et al., 2022).

Self-confidence in Islam is also related to the balance between the world and the hereafter. Good time management and the awareness to always try without feeling burdened are important parts of building a stable sense of confidence. By understanding and applying this concept, individuals will more easily face various situations with confidence and calmness.

The results of this study show that Client-Centered Therapy is not only effective in the context of general psychology but also in line with the principles of Islamic education in forming mentally and spiritually strong individuals. With a self-acceptance-oriented approach, this therapy provides opportunities for students to find balance in their lives, build resilience, and strengthen their belief in their potential. This is in line with the goals of Islamic education which seeks to produce a generation that is not only intellectually intelligent, but also has courage, determination, and strong self-confidence in facing life's challenges.

1. CONCLUSION

This study has successfully answered the main objectives outlined in three main aspects: identifying the initial state of the counselee before the application of client-centered theory with positive regard (acceptance) techniques, describing the process of applying the theory in managing anxiety in UINSA students who study while working, and evaluating the impact of the application of the theory on the psychological well-being of the counselee.

The findings of this study indicate that before the application of client-centered theory, students experienced significant levels of anxiety, characterized by negative thought patterns and unbalanced emotional responses to academic and work pressures. However, through the therapeutic process with a focus on acceptance, students were able to develop that the application of client-centered theory with positive regard (acceptance) techniques has great potential in helping students face complex psychological challenges, especially for those who experience double pressure from academic and work demands. The implication of this finding is the importance of integrating this approach in counseling practices in higher education institutions to improve students' overall psychological well-being.

This study recommends several future research directions to deepen the understanding and application of the client-centered approach with positive regard (acceptance) techniques. First, a longitudinal study could be conducted to observe the long-term development of students' psychological well-being after undergoing client-centered therapy. Second, it is important to examine how environmental factors, both academic and occupational, affect the effectiveness of client-centered therapy in managing anxiety. Finally, comparative method research can provide greater insight into the effectiveness of client-centered approaches compared to other techniques in helping students face multiple stresses.

The authors declare no conflict of interest associated with this research. As such, this study makes a significant contribution to our understanding of effective counseling approaches for managing anxiety in college students facing simultaneous academic and work pressures. Through

a client-centered approach with positive regard (acceptance) techniques, university students can benefit significantly in improving their psychological well-being in a higher education environment.

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