

The Effectiveness of Group Counseling Services Using the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) Approach in Preventing Relational Aggression in Students

Lika Widiawati¹, Firman²

¹ Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia; likawidyawati@gmail.com

² Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia; firman@fip.unp.ac.id

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Abstract

Violence among adolescents is an increasingly complex phenomenon, including relational aggression, which often goes undetected due to its covert nature. Relational aggression can have serious consequences, such as depression and even suicidal tendencies among victims. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of group counseling services using the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach in preventing relational aggression among students at SMK 6 Padang. This study employs a quantitative research method with a quasi-experimental design in the form of a pretest-posttest control group design. The research sample consists of 12 students divided into experimental and control groups, each comprising six students, selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The research instrument utilizes a Likert scale, while data analysis is conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and the Mann-Whitney Test. The findings indicate that group counseling services using the CBM approach significantly reduce relational aggression in the experimental group compared to the control group. These results affirm that the CBM approach is effective in modifying students' thought patterns and behaviors related to relational aggression. The implications of this study provide recommendations for guidance and counseling teachers to implement CBM-based group counseling services as an intervention strategy for addressing relational aggression in the school environment.

Kata kunci:

Agresi Relasional;
Bimbingan Kelompok;
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Abstrak

Kekerasan di kalangan remaja merupakan fenomena yang semakin kompleks, termasuk agresi relasional yang sering kali tidak terdeteksi karena sifatnya yang tersembunyi. Agresi relasional dapat menyebabkan dampak serius, seperti depresi hingga kecenderungan bunuh diri pada korban. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis efektivitas layanan bimbingan kelompok dengan pendekatan Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) dalam mencegah agresi relasional pada siswa SMK 6 Padang. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kuantitatif dengan desain eksperimen semu (quasi-experimental) berbentuk pretest-posttest control group design. Sampel penelitian terdiri dari 12 siswa yang terbagi dalam kelompok eksperimen dan kontrol, masing-masing berjumlah enam orang, yang dipilih melalui teknik stratified random sampling. Instrumen penelitian menggunakan skala Likert, sementara analisis data dilakukan dengan Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test dan Mann-Whitney Test. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa layanan bimbingan kelompok dengan pendekatan CBM secara signifikan menurunkan agresi relasional pada kelompok eksperimen dibandingkan kelompok kontrol. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa pendekatan CBM efektif dalam mengubah pola pikir dan perilaku siswa terkait agresi relasional. Implikasi penelitian ini memberikan rekomendasi bagi guru bimbingan dan konseling untuk menerapkan layanan bimbingan kelompok berbasis CBM sebagai strategi intervensi dalam mengatasi agresi relasional di lingkungan sekolah.

Corresponding Author:

Lika Widiawati: Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia; likawidyawati@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of violence among adolescents, particularly relational aggression, has become a global and national concern (Budiman, 2021; Efianingrum et al., 2020; Fauzi & Permadi, 2023; Good et al., 2022). Relational aggression involves non-physical behaviors aimed at damaging interpersonal relationships, such as spreading gossip, ignoring, or ostracizing someone from a social group. Although covert, its impacts are significant, including anxiety, depression, and even suicide among victims (Coyne & Ostrov, 2018; Soekoto et al., 2020). In Indonesia, reports (Simfoni, 2025) highlight a rise in adolescent violence cases, with a high prevalence of aggressive behaviors, including in schools. Similar trends were observed at SMK Negeri 6 Padang, where interviews with school counselors revealed behaviors such as gossiping, avoiding peers, and manipulating groups to exclude individuals. This highlights the urgent need for effective interventions to address relational aggression among students.

The phenomenon of relational aggression at SMK Negeri 6 Padang reflects an urgent need for interventions to reduce such behaviors. Initial observational data indicate that students frequently engage in actions suggesting relational aggression, both directly and indirectly. This situation not only harms victims emotionally but also disrupts the social dynamics of the school environment, which is expected to be a safe and supportive place for learning. Without appropriate intervention, the negative impacts of these behaviors may escalate, highlighting the need for an effective approach to address this issue.

Previous research by (Yonita & Karneli, 2019) demonstrated that the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach is effective in reducing bullying behavior. However, the application of CBM to relational aggression, particularly among vocational high school students, remains underexplored (Arif et al., 2024; Oktaviani et al., 2020; Pusvitasari & Zarkasyi, 2024). This gap provides an opportunity to develop new, more relevant, and context-specific intervention methods. Through this study, the effectiveness of the CBM approach will be tested in reducing relational aggression via group counseling services. This research is expected to contribute to the advancement of knowledge by offering a scientifically validated approach to addressing relational aggression among vocational high school students..

The aim of this study is to analyze the differences in relational aggression levels among students before and after participating in CBM-based group counseling services in the experimental group. This study also seeks to compare changes in relational aggression between the experimental group and the control group, as well as to identify the effectiveness of CBM-based group counseling services compared to conventional group counseling services. With this approach, the research is expected to serve as a guide for school counselors in addressing cases of relational aggression, while also creating a safer and more conducive learning environment.

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RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with an experimental research design. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analyzed to measure the effectiveness of the intervention provided (Rustamana et al., 2024; Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). The research design used is a quasi-experimental design with a pretest-posttest control group design (Hastjarjo, 2019; Rustamana et al., 2024; Syahrizal & Jailani, 2023). This design was selected to compare the levels of relational aggression in the experimental group, which receives CBM-based group counseling services, with the control group, which only receives conventional group counseling services. This method was chosen based on the need to measure significant changes before and after the intervention.

The study was conducted at SMK Negeri 6 Padang, West Sumatra, as the location was relevant due to initial data showing cases of relational aggression among students. The research was carried out over six weeks, from October 14 to December 3, 2024. Each group counseling session lasted for 2 x 45 minutes, with a one-week interval between meetings. The subjects of the study were 12 students selected using stratified random sampling from a population of 298 students. The subjects were divided into two groups: the experimental group and the control group, with each group consisting of 6 students.

Data collection was carried out using a validated and reliable Likert scale questionnaire to measure the levels of relational aggression among students. This instrument includes indicators of direct, indirect, proactive, and reactive relational aggression. Pretest data was collected before the intervention, while posttest data was collected after all the counseling sessions were completed. Data analysis was conducted using the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test to measure the differences between pretest and posttest within each group, and the Mann-Whitney test was used to compare the results between the experimental and control groups.

The selection of this method is based on the research goal of testing the effectiveness of CBM-based group counseling services in depth. With this approach, the research findings are expected to provide strong empirical evidence regarding the benefits of CBM in reducing relational aggression among students in the school environment.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the data analysis of students at SMK N 6 Padang, the level of relational aggression among students is categorized as high. According to the criteria for determining relational aggression levels, it was found that the average relational aggression among the entire population of 298 students revealed that 91 students fell into the very high category, 164 students were in the high category, 19 students were in the low category, and 24 students were in the very low category. This means that, in general, the relational aggression levels of students are in the high category. Students were found to be engaging in spreading malicious rumors, gossip, and intentionally excluding peers with the aim of damaging someone's social identity.

To view the data for each category, it can be seen in the table below.

Table 1. Tabulation of Overall Relational Aggression Data for Students

Category	Interval	F	%
Very High (VH)	>114	91	30,53691275
High (H)	92-113	164	55,03355705
Low (L)	70-91	19	6,375838926
Very Low (VL)	47-69	24	8,053691275
Total		298	100

Based on Table 1 above, it can be seen that the relational aggression data shows the distribution of aggression levels by category. Of the 298 respondents, 91 students (30.53%) fall into the "Very High" category, while 164 students (55.03%) are in the "High" category, which is the largest group. The "Low" category is filled by 19 students (6.37%), and 24 students (8.05%) are in the "Very Low" category.

The level of relational aggression among students before the intervention (pretest) falls into the high category. Furthermore, there is a difference in the level of relational aggression among students after the intervention (posttest) between the experimental group and the control group. Below is a description of the pretest and posttest relational aggression data for each group.

Table 2. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression Data for the Experimental

No	Initials	Pretest		Posttest		N-Gain Score %
		Total	Category	Total	Category	
1	EKB	118	Very High	50	Very Low	68
2	KKP	128	Very High	59	Very Low	76
3	FA	104	High	65	Very Low	46
4	AAN	88	Low	61	Very Low	30
5	APA	96	High	31	Very Low	55
6	TAS	112	High	62	Very Low	57
Total		646		328		331
Average		107,67	Very High	54,67	Very Low	55

Based on Table 2 above, it is shown that the relational aggression comparison for the experimental group before receiving group counseling services with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach had an average score of 107.67%, placing them in the very high category. From the pretest results of relational aggression from the 6 students in the experimental group, there were 2 students in the very high category, 3 students in the high category, and 1 student in the low category.

After receiving group counseling services with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, the average score was 54.67%, which placed them in the very low category. According to the posttest results of relational aggression for the 6 students in the experimental group, all 6 students fell into the very low category.

From this data, it can be seen that the overall N-Gain score obtained was 55%, indicating a reduction in relational aggression among the students in the experimental group after receiving group counseling services with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach.

To identify significant differences in the levels of relational aggression among the students in the experimental group before (pretest) and after (posttest) receiving the intervention in the form of group counseling services with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, the data analysis results are presented as follows.

Table 3. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test Analysis Results for the Difference in Relational Aggression Between Pretest and Posttest in the Experimental Group.

Test Statistics ^a	
	Post Test - Pre Test
Z	-2.201 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.028
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on positive ranks.	

Based on Table 3 above, it can be seen that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) probability for relational aggression in the experimental group is 0.028, which is below 0.05 (0.028 < 0.05). From this result, H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted. Therefore, the first hypothesis tested in this study can be accepted, which states, "There is a significant difference in relational aggression among students in the experimental group before and after receiving group counseling services using the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach." To see the direction of this difference, whether the pretest or posttest scores are higher, refer to Table 4 below:

Table 4. Direction of Difference Between Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression in the Experimental Group

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
PostTest Eksperimen- PreTest Eksperimen	Negative Ranks	6 ^a	3.50	21.00
	Positive Ranks	0 ^b	.00	.00
	Ties	0 ^c		

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	Total	6	
a. Post Test < Pre Test			
b. Post Test > Pre Test			
c. Post Test = Pre Test			

Based on Table 4, all respondents (6 students) in the experimental group analyzed showed a decrease in scores from pretest to posttest. This result indicates that the experimental group experienced a significant change after participating in group counseling using the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach. According to the Wilcoxon Signed-Ranks Test ($Z = -2.201, p = 0.028$), this change is statistically significant, with relational aggression initially high, then decreasing to a lower level in the posttest. These findings suggest that the CBM approach is effective in reducing relational aggression in the experimental group.

The level of relational aggression in each experimental group from the pretest and posttest results can be described as follows.

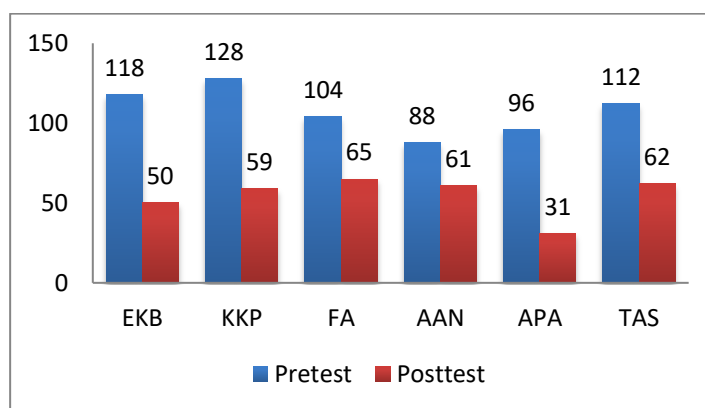


Figure 1 Histogram of Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression Data Experimental Group

Then, the following is the description of the pretest and posttest relational aggression data for the control group.

Table 5. Comparison of Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression Data for Control Group Students

No	Initials	Pretest		Posttest		N-Gain Score
		Total	Category	Total	Category	
1	NH	121	Very High	99	High	43
2	MN	112	High	88	Low	39
3	NZ	68	Very Low	55	Very Low	14
4	NKH	91	Low	72	Low	24
5	BCI	114	Very High	109	High	12
6	DU	120	Very High	98	High	42
Total		626		521		74
Average		104,33	Very High	86,83	High	29

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Based on Table 5, it is observed that the relational aggression comparison for the control group before receiving group counseling without a specific treatment shows an average score of 104.33%, which places students in the "Very High" category. According to the pretest results of relational aggression for the control group, 3 students were in the "Very High" category, 1 student in the "High" category, 1 student in the "Low" category, and 1 student in the "Very Low" category.

After receiving conventional group counseling, the average score was 86.83%, which falls in the "Low" category. The posttest results for the 6 students in the control group show 3 students in the "High" category, 2 students in the "Low" category, and 1 student in the "Very Low" category.

As presented above, the overall N-Gain score of 29% indicates a decrease in relational aggression for the control group after receiving conventional group counseling.

To determine whether there is a significant difference in relational aggression levels for the control group students before (pretest) and after (posttest) receiving group counseling without the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, the results are presented as follows.

Table 6. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test for Relational Aggression Between Pretest and Posttest for the Control Group

Test Statistics ^a	
	Post Test - Pre Test
Z	-2.207 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.027
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test	
b. Based on positive ranks.	

Based on Table 6, it can be seen that the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) probability for relational aggression in the control group is 0.027, which is below 0.05 ($0.027 < 0.05$). Based on these results, H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted. Therefore, the second hypothesis tested in this study can be accepted, namely, "There is a significant difference in relational aggression in the control group students before and after receiving group counseling without the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach."

To observe the direction of the difference, whether the posttest is lower than the pretest, it can be seen in Table 7 as follows.

Table 7. Direction of Difference Between Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression for the Control Group

Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
<i>PostTest</i> Kontrol - <i>PreTest</i> Kontrol	Negative Ranks	6 ^a	3.50	21.00
	Positive Ranks	0 ^b	.00	.00
	Ties	0 ^c		
	Total	6		
a. Post Test < Pre Test				

b. Post Test > Pre Test

c. Post Test = Pre Test

Based on Table 7, out of the 6 respondents from the control group involved in the analysis, 6 students showed a decrease from pretest to posttest. Therefore, based on the results above, it can be interpreted that the control group underwent a significant change after participating in conventional group counseling or without special treatment. This can be seen as all 6 students who underwent conventional group counseling or without special treatment experienced a negative change, where the posttest score was lower than the pretest score.

The relational aggression levels for each group based on the pretest and posttest results can be depicted as follows.

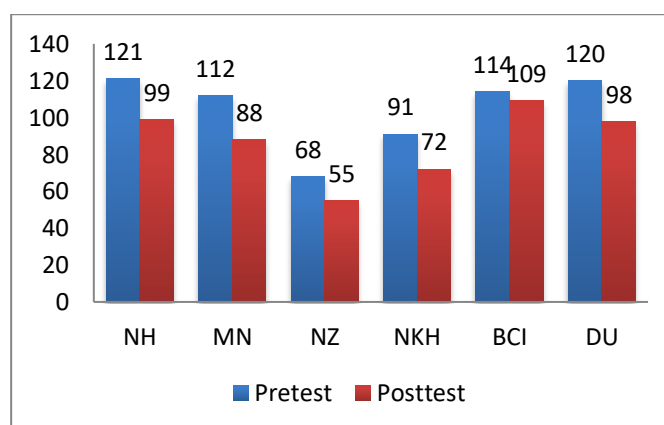


Figure 2 Histogram of Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression Data for the Control Group

The findings show a difference in the average scores of relational aggression reduction between the experimental group, which received group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, and the control group, which received group counseling without the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach. This is based on the calculations shown in the following table.

Table 8. Results of the Mann-Whitney Test for Relational Aggression between the Experimental and Control Groups

Test Statistics ^a	
	Agresi Relasional
Mann-Whitney U	4.000
Wilcoxon W	25.000
Z	-2.242
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.025
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.026 ^b
a. Grouping Variable: Kelas	
b. Not corrected for ties.	

Based on Table 8, the probability of Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) for relational aggression in the experimental group and control group is 0.025, or a probability below 0.05 ($0.025 < 0.05$). The U value (4.000) indicates that the ranking of the experimental group (group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach) is higher than that of the control group (group counseling without any special treatment or conventionally). The W value that supports the findings from the U value explains that the implementation of group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach influences the reduction in relational aggression among students.

These results indicate that the implementation of group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach has a significant impact on reducing relational aggression compared to the control group, which only received conventional group counseling.

From these results, H₀ is rejected and H₁ is accepted. The third hypothesis tested in this study is accepted, namely that there is a significant difference in the reduction of relational aggression between the experimental group, which received group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, and the control group, which received group counseling without any special treatment. Since there is a significant difference, it can be stated that the implementation of group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach has an effect on reducing relational aggression.

In the data description section, it can be seen that the average score of the experimental group is lower than that of the control group. This difference occurred because the experimental group was given the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) treatment, while the control group received group counseling without any special treatment.

Discussion

The findings of this study show a significant difference in relational aggression between the experimental and control groups. To better understand the conceptual results of this study, a discussion is presented on the research findings.

Results of Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression in the Experimental Group

Based on the results of the first hypothesis test, "group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach in reducing relational aggression in the experimental group," the findings indicate that the relational aggression scores of the experimental group before and after the treatment were significantly different.

The average pretest score for relational aggression among students before receiving group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach was 107.67, which falls into the very high category. After receiving group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, there was a decrease, with the average posttest score for the experimental group being 54.67, which falls into the very low category. Therefore, the provision of group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach effectively reduced relational aggression in students.

This decrease in the average score demonstrates the effectiveness of group counseling with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach in helping students address relational aggression behavior. The interventions conducted during

the counseling process were proven to influence students' thinking patterns, emotions, and behaviors, enabling them to manage social interactions more positively. This aligns with the fundamental principles of Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM), which emphasize that cognitive change is the first step in modifying maladaptive behaviors (Agahheris et al., 2019; Febriani, 2022; Province, 2020; Yusri & Karneli, 2023).

Furthermore, the statistical test results show that the difference between the pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant, as suggested by (Beinhauer, 2018; Chen, 2015)(Krishnan, 2024) who stated that significant differences may indicate the effectiveness of behavior-change interventions. Therefore, the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach can be recommended as an effective method for addressing relational aggression issues among students, particularly through group counseling formats that foster interaction and support among group members.

Results of Pretest and Posttest Relational Aggression in the Control Group

Based on the results of testing the second hypothesis, which states "there is a significant difference in relational aggression in the control group students before and after receiving group counseling services without the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach," the findings indicate an increase in relational aggression scores in the control group. The average pretest score for relational aggression among students before receiving group counseling services was 104.33, which falls into the very high category. After receiving conventional group counseling services without a specific approach, the average posttest score decreased to 86.83, which still falls into the low category.

This decrease in scores indicates that conventional group counseling services can have a positive impact on reducing relational aggression in students, although the results are not as effective as those of a theory-based approach, such as Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) (Coyne & Ostrov, 2018) explain that while conventional group counseling services can help students through group interaction and support, more structured approaches tend to yield more significant results. Therefore, these results highlight the importance of choosing the right approach in group counseling to address relational aggression more optimally.

Difference in Relational Aggression Between the Experimental and Control Groups

Based on the results of testing the third hypothesis, which states "there is a significant difference in relational aggression between students in the experimental group who received group counseling services with the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach and students in the control group who received group counseling services without the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach," data analysis shows a statistically significant result.

The Mann-Whitney U test results show a U value of 4.000, with a Z value of -2.242 and an asymptotic significance level (Asymp. Sig. 2-tailed) of 0.025, and an exact significance value (Exact Sig.) of 0.026. Since the significance value is smaller than the alpha level of 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a meaningful difference between the relational aggression scores of students in the experimental group and the control group.

The experimental group, which received group counseling services based on the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach, showed a decrease in the average relational aggression score from 107.67 (very high category) to 54.67 (very low category). In contrast, the control group, which received conventional group

counseling services, experienced a smaller decrease, from 104.33 (very high category) to 86.83 (low category). This difference indicates that the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM)-based intervention is more effective in reducing relational aggression in students.

The effectiveness of the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach aligns with the theory proposed by ((Febriani, 2022; Province, 2020; Yusri & Karneli, 2023) (Agahheris et al., 2019) which states that this approach can modify maladaptive thinking patterns and behaviors through structured cognitive and behavioral interventions. (Corey, 2023) also points out that theory-based approaches are likely to yield more significant results in improving an individual's emotional and social functioning compared to non-specific interventions. These findings emphasize the importance of applying the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach in the context of group counseling services to optimally address relational aggression in students.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that group counseling services using the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach are effective in reducing relational aggression among students at SMK 6 Padang. The main findings indicate a significant difference in the level of relational aggression before and after the intervention in the experimental group, while the control group did not show significant changes. This confirms that the CBM approach is capable of modifying students' thought patterns and behaviors, thereby reducing their tendency to engage in relational aggression. Furthermore, this study highlights that relational aggression does not only occur in direct forms but also in indirect, proactive, and reactive forms, which were previously overlooked in the school environment. After the intervention, students demonstrated improved emotional regulation, enhanced positive social interactions, and a reduction in relationally aggressive behaviors that harm their interpersonal relationships.

However, this study has several limitations that need to be considered. First, the research sample is limited to only 12 students, making it difficult to generalize the findings broadly. Second, the study was conducted within a single educational institution, limiting its ability to represent variations in other schools with different social and cultural backgrounds. Third, the sample variation is restricted, particularly in terms of gender and age range, which may affect the results. Fourth, the research method employed was solely quasi-experimental, without further qualitative exploration to gain a deeper understanding of students' psychological dynamics. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the sample size, include schools from various regions, consider differences in gender and age, and combine both quantitative and qualitative research methods to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the Cognitive Behavior Modification (CBM) approach in preventing relational aggression among students.

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