

The Role of DBT based Counseling in Supporting Recovery of Traumatized Women from Domestic Violence

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Abstract

Domestic violence refers to physical violence so does verbal and sexual violence. Domestic violence is worldwide concern because it leads to potential mental disorders in the long run. Mental disorders that may be experienced by D 2 self. The inability to control thoughts and transitions makes vulnerability to trauma such as the difficulties discussed, nightmares, remembering the experience of past struggle, more sensitiveness to neutral things, outburst of anger, disappointment, and feeling hopeless. The study aims to facilitate women who face problems with skills that can be used in situations where they have difficulty controlling their thoughts and feelings. Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) helps victims to focus on present then learn to accept their life experiences without any judgement. DBT-based counseling has given in three sessions: (1) pressure tolerance, (2) attention, and (3) emotional regulation. The researchers involved two female participants who lived temporarily in a safe house. The selection of participants based on the BDI-II scale that shows moderate to high depression participants then checklisted the types of violences that they had, as well as the physical and psychological triggered by violence discussed from the partner. After had three DBT-based counseling sessions, the changes emerge as participants return to having the belief that they will able to reorganize their life by using the resources within themselves.

Keywords: behavior therapy, dialectical, domestic violence

Abstrak

Kekerasan dalam rumah tangga mengacu pada serangkaian perilaku kekerasan yang tidak hanya secara fisik, tetapi juga verbal, dan seksual. Kekerasan tersebut merupakan salah satu fenomena yang telah menjadi perhatian dunia karena perilaku kekerasan yang diterima korban secara jangka panjang dapat mengarah pada potensi gangguan mental. Gangguan mental yang mungkin dialami oleh D 2 diri. Ketidakmampuan mengendalikan pikiran dan emosi membuat korban rentan mengalami beberapa simptom trauma seperti pemikiran-pemikiran yang mengganggu, mimpi buruk, mengalami kembali pengalaman kekerasan, lebih sensitif terhadap hal yang bersifat netral, dan juga luapan emosi negatif berlebihan seperti perasaan sedih, marah, kecewa, dan merasa putus asa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memfasilitasi para perempuan korban kekerasan dengan beberapa keterampilan yang dapat digunakan dalam situasi saat mengalami kesulitan untuk mengendalikan pikiran dan perasaan mereka. Keterampilan ini diberikan melalui konseling berbasis Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) guna membantu korban untuk fokus pada right here right now moment dan belajar untuk menerima pengalaman hidup mereka tanpa memberikan penilaian apa pun. Konseling berbasis DBT diberikan dalam tiga sesi: (1) distress tolerance, (2) mindfulness, dan (3) emotion regulation. Peneliti melibatkan dua partisipan berjenis kelamin perempuan yang sementara tinggal di rumah aman. Pemilihan partisipan didasarkan oleh skala BDI-II yang menunjukkan setidaknya partisipan berada pada level depresi sedang ke atas, dan juga checklist terkait jenis-jenis kekerasan yang diterima, serta dampak fisik dan psikologis yang disebabkan oleh kekerasan yang dialami dari pasangan. Setelah melalui tiga sesi konseling berbasis DBT, muncul perubahan yakni partisipan kembali memiliki keyakinan bahwa mereka sebagai individu mampu menata kembali hidupnya dengan memanfaatkan sumber daya yang ada dalam dirinya.

Kata kunci: behavior therapy, dialectical, kekerasan dalam rumah tangga

Introduction

Domestic violence is a phenomenon that has garnered worldwide attention because of its relation to human rights and quality of life on an individual, both physically and psychologically. So far, we have been convinced that domestic violence is more prevalent in less educated, and low social economic societies. However, domestic violence actually has no specific pattern of characteristic about the abuser. In Indonesia, Komisi Nasional Perempuan (KOMNAS Perempuan) recorded that the number of reported cases for domestic violence are increasing year by year, but the reports that they have received were just the tip of iceberg. It means, there are still a wide number of unreported cases of domestic violence.

Domestic violence in Indonesia is more complex because it cannot be separated from the patriarchal culture that is still believed by the community. They believe that the man should be the backbone of the family. Therefore, without their husband, it is not only embarrassing for the women, but they also become powerless under the belief that women usually only do the household work and have no any income. As a woman, they believe that woman should be less dominant, and be the submissive one to the man. These false beliefs are still believed by most of the people make a lot of women still become a victim of domestic violence and received torture or persecution that they should not have received.

According to Barnish (2004) women who are the victims of domestic violence, experience several psychological stages. In the early stages, some women usually react to abuse with shock and disbelief. They would make a rationalization by convincing themselves that it was just an accident, nor even consider their partner's action as an act of violence. They think they deserved to be treated that way as a punishment because of their mistakes. When the abuse becomes something reoccurring, women start to develop coping strategies to deal with it. They often preserve hope that one day their husband will realized and they will have a better relationship. Some of them start to blame themselves and try to meet the expectations from their partner.

Furthermore, women are more likely find a strategy in order to make them feel more safe. When the violence becomes more unpredictable, the tendency of depression and demoralization are more likely to occur. This stage is a vulnerable stage for women due to the risk of them trying to defeat their problem by using drugs and alcohol to suppress their feelings. When the tensions are high and they are no longer have ability to control the situation, some of them will develop an idea that stay with the abusive partner is better than escape and having nowhere to go. This idea leads to how women make a lot of excuses and justification about what their partner did to them.

After several moments, one day they will realized that the relation that they have been working on for several years is not a relationship that they are expected. The redefining the relationship give them a chance to see the reality as it is and indirectly increase their self-worth. They eventually have the more courage to step out from the unhealthy relationship. Some of them convinced themselves to have a divorce and live separately from their abusive partner. The recovery stage is not only important but also high risk. Therefore, supervision from a therapist is suggested as a prevention because they are still vulnerable and at the risk of destructive behavior such as the addiction tendency, or self-harming because they have

trouble with managing their negative thought about the traumatic experience that they have been through.

By understanding the process of how women perceived the traumatic experience, that they are tend to develop symptoms related to trauma disorder such as, feeling hopelessness, hyper-arousal, dissociation, flashbacks, avoidance, depression, and also negative emotions such as sadness, anger, helplessness, and unworthiness. The psychological impact that caused by traumatic experience make women should be provided with some skills that might be useful in their emergency situation, when they have a flashback in the middle of the night, or the moment when they cannot control their thoughts by thinking about the past traumatic experience and feel terribly upset because that moment they have no power to fight back.

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is a method developed by Marsha Linehan by focusing on right here right now experience and acceptance. At first, DBT is intended for people with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) who have suicidal tendencies and self-harming. However, recently DBT is also effective to help not only BPD patients, but also several psychological problems such as domestic violence victim who are overwhelmed with their negative emotions. DBT has four basics and important skills, which are: (1) distress tolerance, (2) mindfulness, (3) emotion regulation, and (4) interpersonal effectiveness. In this study, we are focus on four skills that they can practice in daily life.

From distress tolerance skills, we expect participants have a better way to regulate their negative emotions by using distress tolerance techniques. In mindfulness, participants are trying to focus on right here right now moment so they can be more present in the present moment, instead of focusing on the all three skills are complement to each other in order to achieve one goal of DBT, that they can accept their situation without any judgment. By giving them counseling based on DBT we expect them to have a better coping skills to help them recover from traumatic experiences.

Method

The research method used in this study is applied research because we try to give an immediate response in order to solve the current problem either it has already happened in a community, to prevent, or to fix (Miller, 2007). According to how we gather information, this research can be categorized as a qualitative research in order to capture and try to communicate something from the data that we have gained from the participant (Patton, 2002).

The aim of this research is not only try to describe about the psychological impact from the domestic violence but also provide some skills that can reduce their emotional suffering from the domestic violence. The sampling technique that we used in this study is criterion sampling to confirm that researcher will gain the rich information and have a fully understanding about the problems those are perceived by the participants.

This study involved two participants: (1) women with experiences of domestic violence at least one year, (2) the trauma caused some problems such as insomnia, frequent flashback, nightmares, lack of appetite, and any psychological conflicts that caused by the traumatic

experiences. Participants are obtained from a safe house in Jakarta, who are given a temporary home to women and children of violence victim.

Screening participants were collected by administrating BDI-II that has been adapted to Indonesian verse, and psychological assessment by using BAUM and DAP to check if there is any potential risk that may put their life in danger. Before completing any assessment required, all participants had agreed to participate in this study by completing informed consent forms.

We also use an interview schedule that is also adapted from IPV (Intimate Partner Violence) questionnaire, ABI (Abusive Behavior Inventory), and psychological symptoms form stress-acute stress disorder based on DSM V. The type of question that we used mostly are open question in order to give some chances to the participants to express their thought and emotion.

According to Yin (2011) analysis data in qualitative research usually has five stages; (1) compiling, (2) disassembling, (3) reassembling, (4) interpreting, (5) concluding. Data is then interpreted to create a new narration to aid in answering the research question.

The counseling based on DBT module also has been checked and reviewed with an expert opinion to ensure that intervention module is suitable to be applied for women of domestic violence victim. The counseling is divided into three sessions, with each session lasting about 30–40 minutes. Even the duration might be short compared to any other therapies, the effectiveness did not lay on the length of period but how participants could maintain their focus and attention even in just several minutes. These three sessions are given to obtain one main goal which is to facilitate women to have better coping skills strategies while they start to gather their lives back together. Through DBT, they have some more adaptable coping strategies to manage their thoughts and negative emotions, we expected them to be able to increase their self-esteem and can empower their inner sources.

In short, the DBT technique given to participants were skills those can be applied and practiced whenever they feel like they are overwhelmed with their negative emotions. Even the sessions are divided in three sessions, actually it is integrated, but as introduction, participants were gradually introduced with those skills. Start from distress tolerance to decrease level of tensions, and provide some skills of crisis management. Managing tension into certain level does not only rely on skills in distress tolerance, but also with mindfulness skills and emotion regulation. Nonetheless, it is basically can be started from distress tolerance.

There are a few skills from distress tolerance that has been introduced to the participants, such as TIPP Skills (changing the body chemistry, known as some activities that might be helpful to lower our body temperature), for example; exercise, soaking face in the bowl of cold water, pace the breathing, progressive relaxation muscle, or any other activities to distract themselves. In mindfulness, participants were introduced with some skills to help them calmer by experiencing right here right now moment. Focused in only one activity at the same time. The main goal of this exercise is helping the participants to regain control of their thoughts. By aiding participants to manage their thoughts, they are more likely able to prevent the intrusive negative thoughts. In general, the emotion regulation skills help participants to collect as much as positive emotions through activities and hobbies, so they

are able to replace the negative emotions with something those are more meaningful and positive.

This study also has been reviewed and approved by the Institute of Research and Community Service (IRCS) with references number: 1354/III/LPPM-PM.10.05/10/2018. By gaining the approval by IRCS, this study has considered to ensure that this study does not bring any danger to participants.

Results

The results of this study that involved two participants showed there are several similarities and differences. First, in accordance with the explanation from Barnish, the violence that has been going on for years make them feel unworthy and the women start to believe that what happened to them is a thing that cannot be changed. Even though they feel unworthy and powerless, it still need to be consider the presence of children indirectly bringing hope and make them feel that they are important for somebody. Despite of the fact those children are not directly related to their self-esteem, the nature of nurturing from a mother indirectly make them feel needed. The needed feeling and the willingness to bring a life for their children make them more powerful to regain their life back because they still have something to fight for and make their presence significant.

Second, apparently both of participants showed several symptoms of trauma. Violent behavior that they have received make them unconsciously develop a simultaneously flight response and caused anxiety towards the abuser. They built a belief in their mind that the person who abused them unpredictably will do something that might hurt them. The constant fear that experienced by participants lead to put them at the higher risk to develop anxiety disorder, or any disorder related to stress and trauma.

Third, we found out that the both participants have almost the same pattern that the intrusive thoughts and flashbacks are more often during the night when they were less active. In response to this problem, the DBT based counseling playing an important role to help the participants. The exercises from DBT is learn to control their mind by focusing at right here right now experience. They are practicing to clear their mind and focus on a thing. By continuing this exercise, this will likely make the participants find a better coping mechanism to handle their problems.

After three sessions of counseling, participants seemed to regain control of their life. The hesitation sometimes occurs during the conversation, but they started to believe in themselves. Furthermore, by the end of intervention, those participants were capable enough to start a new live by thinking and planning about what they can do to optimize the inner resources. This finding is along with the main goal which is to facilitate women to have an adequate coping strategies and more steady with their life decision. Even though, we still need to evaluate the program that we have made to ensure the changes that has been obtained by the participants are remain stable.

Discussion

We found out that the most common disturbance that appeared in both participants are lack of sleep, flashback, thinking about the past experiences, and helplessness feeling. So far all the negative moods and symptoms are met with several criteria of trauma caused by domestic violence. The intensity or the depth of emotions and intrusive thought seems to be influenced by the intensity of how severe the torture that they have received from their partner.

Related to the research instruments that have been used in this study BDI-II and questionnaire still limited on type of violence, frequency, and potency of stress and trauma related disorder. Regarding to this topic, the more-in depth study by involving more participants to participate in this topic research might enriching our data especially if there are any personality factors that may affect the trauma intensity and the DBT effectiveness as a method to help women have a better coping strategies to manage their thoughts and negative emotions.

Limitation

This study has several limitations. First, this study involved limited number of participants, therefore, it is difficult to determine what kind of personality that might be the most suitable for DBT. Second, the point of view of this study is still limited focusing on the overwhelming emotions but emotion itself is something that cannot be separated with cognition. A traumatic experience lead to cognitive distortion affects how people think about something, and perceived things differently.

Conclusion

Based on the findings in this study, negative experiences like domestic violence will bring trauma, both physically and psychologically. Psychological trauma that happened gradually. The accumulation of incapability to manage negative emotions will potentially lead to more serious psychological problem such as acute stress disorder, depression, PTSD, moreover tendencies of self-harming because the hopelessness feeling to deal with their problem.

We found out that even this study is more alike a personal problem, we still need to be aware of any potential issues that might occur in the participant's surroundings such as children, relatives, friends that might be effected by this personal problem.

The results of this study are expected to provide a module that has been adapted and adjust to meet the needs of women, domestic violence victim. From the three counselling sessions, we found out that one of participant is able to think more clearly and starting to put things together back in life. She started to find concrete ideas about her ability to manage finances, and gradually began to dare entering the healthier environment such as learning something new to enriching herself so she has no longer depend on his husband income.

Recommendation

So far, the module that has been designed for domestic violence victims is applicable and easy to apply because the materials that we use are easy to obtain in every household. We also adjusted some skills and activities that are more commonly applied in Indonesia. But since the alternative of activities need to adapt to the limited available tools in the safe houses, it makes them have very limited alternative activities.

Therefore, for further studies, we suggest to have more various activities so they have more opportunities to choose what kind of activity that might be the most suitable and comfortable for them. We also need to consider the fact that some participants may grow weary or lose interest by repeating the same exercise. The more various activities gave them chance to develop themselves by doing any kind of exercises that may be useful for them. Even so, the counselor who would like to apply this method should have a certification or at least under supervision by the certified on DBT in order to prevent any potential mistreatment which can affect the welfare of the participants.

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