



Journal of Educational Sciences

Journal homepage: <https://jes.ejournal.unri.ac.id/index.php/JES>



P-ISSN
2581-1657

E-ISSN
2581-2203

The Effect of REBT with the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) Technique to Reduce Self-Injury in Class X Students of SMK Negeri 6 Medan

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 23 Nov 2025

Revised: 19 Des 2025

Accepted: 24 Des 2025

Published online: 05 Jan 2026

Keywords:

REBT,
REI,
Self Injury

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Article Doi:

<https://doi.org/10.31258/jes.10.1.p.1292-1301>

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to determine the effect of the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach using the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) technique in reducing self-injury behavior among 10th grade students at SMK Negeri 6 Medan. The background of this study is based on the high tendency of adolescents to engage in self-injury as a maladaptive coping mechanism for emotional stress. The research method used was quantitative with a pre-experimental one-group pretest posttest design, involving four students selected through purposive sampling from 65 students. The data collection instrument, a self-injury scale, was analyzed using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank test. The result demonstrated a significant reduction in self-injury levels following individual counseling interventions based on the REBT approach and REI technique, with a value of 0.046 ($p < 0.05$). These findings indicate that the REBT approach with REI techniques is effective in reducing students' self-injury behavior by changing irrational thinking patterns into rational ones, thereby enabling them to manage their emotions more adaptively. This study recommends the application of REI as a counseling strategy in schools to prevent and decrease self-harming behaviors in adolescents, such as self-injury.

1. Introduction

Nelson Mandela once stated that "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world" (Madani et al., 2023). This statement emphasizes the crucial role of education in shaping students' mindsets and character. Through education, individuals acquire knowledge and skills as well as critical thinking and problem-solving abilities (Susanto, 2021). Education provides a foundation for individuals to recognize their potential and face life challenges. The transition period between early and middle adolescence is represented by the age range of 14 to 17.

High school students experience physical, emotional, and psychological changes during this stage. Adolescents begin to search for identity and face social challenges. Emotionally, adolescents are no longer children but not yet adults, making this period unstable (Medy & Siregar, 2024; Suryana *et al.*, 2022). Internal conflict (conflict within oneself) and external conflict (conflict arising from outside) are some of the issues that inevitably arise during this transition. Internal conflict includes feelings such as shame and despair, while external conflict arises from social rejection or unpleasant treatment. Freud stated that adolescence is a period full of conflict due to difficulties in adapting to developmental changes (Thesalonika & Apsari, 2021).

Generally, the way individuals resolve problems or issues is referred to as a coping mechanism. Coping mechanisms are strategies used to manage emotional stress and personal problems. Adaptive coping helps individuals regulate emotions effectively, while poor coping occurs when individuals fail to manage problems optimally (Sholekhah *et al.*, 2025). Poor coping mechanisms typically lead to behaviors that suppress emotions, which can result in self-destructive behaviors such as self-injury. Self-injury is a behavior in which individuals intentionally harm themselves as a response to emotional distress. This behavior includes cutting, hitting, biting, or burning the skin and is generally categorized as Non-Suicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) (Shalsabilla *et al.*, 2023). NSSI is intentionally carried out to divert psychological pain into physical pain, such as scratching or cutting body parts (Elvira & Sakti, 2021). This is reinforced by Walsh's opinion, who explains that individuals engage in self-injury to relieve excessive emotional burdens (Widodo & Nursalim, 2023).

Self-injury is sometimes associated with emotional reactions to a breakup, but this factor is not the sole cause. This behavior may be influenced by family conditions, personality traits, and psychological factors. Adolescents are particularly vulnerable due to identity exploration and difficulties in emotional regulation (Shalsabilla *et al.*, 2023). Factors causing self-injury can be categorized as internal and external (Wrycza & Susilawati, 2024). Internal factors include low self-esteem, trauma, and suppressed emotions, while external factors include unsupportive family environments and poor communication patterns. This shows that self-injury develops through personal and environmental interactions.

Interviews with guidance and counseling teachers at SMK Negeri 6 Medan revealed that a tenth-grade student was known to self-injure by cutting his arm. This finding indicates that self-injury behavior exists in the school environment and requires serious intervention. Therefore, appropriate counseling approaches are needed to reduce self-injury behavior. This counseling approach has previously been shown to have a positive impact on reducing self-injury. REBT has been shown to help individuals replace maladaptive behaviors with more adaptive ones by identifying irrational thoughts and transforming them into rational beliefs (Amalia, 2019). The selection of the REBT approach in cases of self-injury is also based on the characteristics of the behavior.

Students who self-injure often experience traumatic events that trigger irrational thoughts. Self-injury behavior is influenced by cognitive, emotional, and environmental dimensions, making REBT a relevant approach (Rini, 2022). This is reinforced by Walsh's opinion (Widodo & Nursalim, 2023), who explains that individuals who self-injure are more likely to attempt self-injury as a way to relieve excessive emotional burdens. Furthermore, Walsh also states that NSSI (Non-Suicidal Self-Injury) is intentionally carried out by someone to injure themselves to divert psychological pain onto the body or physically, such as scratching, slicing, and burning body parts, leaving scars (Elvira & Sakti, 2021).

The REBT approach has a pattern based on A (Activating Experience), B (Belief System), C (Consequence), D (Disputing Beliefs), and E (Effective New Philosophy). These components form an interconnected process that influences emotional and behavioral changes. Rational thinking produces adaptive behavior, while irrational thinking leads to maladaptive behavior (Jannah *et al.*, 2024; Rakhmi, 2021). REBT views humans as individuals influenced by interconnected thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Humans strive to avoid pain and achieve satisfaction in life. Self-injury can be understood as a maladaptive effort to cope with emotional distress (Imamah *et al.*, 2022). As part of REBT, the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) technique is used to help clients face triggering situations by imagining them and practicing healthier emotional responses. REI is a guided mental exercise that helps individuals replace irrational responses with adaptive ones (Wirga *et al.*, 2020).

Simply put, the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) technique is a mental exercise involving rational emotional imagery. Clients are guided to reimagine triggering situations and respond more rationally to develop healthier emotional habits. In practice, clients are asked to focus on rational thoughts to replace irrational ones. This exercise is performed regularly to strengthen emotional regulation. Through relaxation and imagery, clients practice responding adaptively to distressing situations. The REI technique is considered effective because it functions as mental training to replace maladaptive emotional responses with adaptive ones. Through individual counseling, clients learn to manage emotions more flexibly and rationally (Widodo & Nursalim, 2023).

This study differs from previous research conducted by Ramadhani *et al.* (2023), which applied the REI technique through group counseling. In contrast, the present study uses individual counseling with the REBT approach to provide more personalized intervention. Several studies also support the effectiveness of implementing REBT with the REI technique in treating self-injury. REBT-based interventions have been shown to reduce self-injury tendencies by changing irrational thought patterns into rational ones (Melamita & Syukur, 2022).

This study is designed to examine the effect of implementing Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) using the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) technique in reducing self-injury behavior among tenth-grade students at SMK Negeri 6 Medan. Through this intervention, students are expected to be able to change irrational

thought patterns that trigger self-injury behavior into more rational and adaptive ones. The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of REBT with the REI technique in reducing self-injury behavior and to provide an alternative intervention strategy for Guidance and Counseling teachers in addressing students who exhibit self-injury tendencies.

2. Methodology

The type of research to be conducted by the author is research conducted through a quantitative pre-experimental approach utilizing a one-group pretest–posttest design (Arikunto, 2002). This design was chosen because it is appropriate for measuring changes in variables before and after treatment without a control group for comparison (Sugiyono, 2022). The study began in July 2025. The study population was 10th-grade accounting students at SMK Negeri 6 Medan. A purposive sampling procedure was applied to determine the sample based on self-injury pretest questionnaire scores, with 4 out of 65 students with scores ranging from 72 to 96 selected. The classification of self-injury score categories is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Self-Injury Score Range

Score	Category
97-116	Very High
80-96	High
63-79	Currently
46-62	Low
29-45	Very Low

Data were collected using a self-injury scale questionnaire adapted from Fatimah (2024) research and its validity was tested through Pearson product-moment correlation with the help of SPSS, where 29 of the 32 items met the validity criteria at a 5% significance level. Data analysis was performed by means of the nonparametric Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, a method appropriate for paired data with non-normal distribution. The study adhered to ethical principles of educational research, with official permission from the school and direct consent from students after being informed about the research procedures. Data confidentiality was maintained, and no interventions that could potentially harm or cause psychological discomfort were performed. The Wilcoxon statistical test was chosen because it can test for differences between two measurements on the same subject, namely before and after treatment, with non-normally distributed data.

3. Results and Discussion

This study was undertaken during July at SMK Negeri 6 Medan, specifically in a Grade X AKL class consisting of 65 students with diverse academic and emotional characteristics. The learning process in the classroom generally ran in a conducive

manner; however, several students showed difficulties in emotional regulation, stress management, and interpersonal relationships during daily school activities. These conditions became the basis for conducting early screening related to self-injurious behavior among students. Data collection began with the administration of a self-injury scale to identify students who showed indications of self-injurious behavior. Based on the pretest results, four students were identified as having scores in the medium and high categories, with a tendency toward high levels of self-injury. The pretest results of the selected experimental sample are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Pretest Results Self-Injury Levels for Experimental Sample (N = 4)

No	Name	Pretest Score	Category
1	AA	86	High
2	SNR	78	Currently
3	HF	75	Currently
4	NNH	78	Currently

Based on the data in the table above, the four students were selected as research samples and subsequently provided with individual counseling intervention employing the REBT approach. Individual counseling services were provided in three sessions. The first session focused on problem identification through an ABCDE analysis to identify dysfunctional beliefs that trigger to self-injurious behavior. Clients are encouraged to share the causes of self-injury and identify irrational beliefs, then learn to replace them with rational beliefs through the dispute technique. At the conclusion of the session, the counselor provides an ABCDE analysis worksheet to reinforce understanding and improve. The ABCDE worksheet was used as a supporting medium during the first counseling session, as shown in Figure 1.

LEMBAR KERJA SISWA (LKS)
KONSELING INDIVIDU TERPERENCANA I

Identitas Siswa

Nama siswa : Nisa Prastika

Kelas : X. PA. 3

Hari/Tanggal : 21 Juli 2025

Jawablah pertanyaan berikut sesuai dengan analisis ABCDE yang telah dilakukan. Tulis jawaban berdasarkan pengalaman dan perasaan setelah konseling individu!

1. Kejadian atau hal apa yang biasanya membuat kamu ingin menyakiti diri (*self-harm*)? (*Identifying Event A*)

Jawab: Saat pertama di bulan Januari, sampai di efek "jelen" karena saya diurusin di kamar mandi, terus melompat ke air karena bu lupa melihat keadaan yg dipanggil, jadi saya juga yg malah di pukul oleh saya, dan saya diurusin, agar bisa kembali ke rumah saya, saya juga tidak bisa lagi merasa nyaman, terus saya sering di siksa atau pemaksaan lain.

2. Pakaian apa yang muncul saat kejadian atau peristiwa itu terjadi? (*Beliefs B*)

Jawab: Pakaian yang saya pakai, ingin memakainya diri saya ingin tidak mau lagi hidup, marah, karena tidak ada artinya hidup.

3. Bagaimana perasaan dan apa tindakanmu setelah pikiran itu muncul? (*Consequences C*)

Jawab: Konvensional karena ketika itu sedang tidak mau keluar rumah, menggeses tangan pakai silet, menaruh cuit di sendiri, menaruh dan tidak berbetikan.

4. Coba pikirlah kembali, apakah pikiran itu benar-benar membantu atau malah membuat masalah? (*Disputing D*)

Jawab: Sekarang saya berpikir tindakan saya hanya konvensional karena tidak, dan tidak benar-benar membantu menyelesaikan masalah.

5. Kalau kamu sudah mengganti pikiran itu dengan yang lebih positif, bagaimana perasaan dan tindakanmu setelah itu? (*Effective New Beliefs E*)

Jawab: Perasaan sudah lebih tenang dari sebelumnya, saya merasa lebih tenang, mulai bilang pikiran untuk keluar diri. Mungkin tindakan saya adalah mengobrol dengan ibu saya, untuk menghilangkan rasa ingin menyakiti diri saat mengalami masalah berat.

Figure 1. ABCDE Worksheet Used in the First Counseling Session

Within the second individual counseling session, the counselor explains the meaning and procedures of the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) technique, both positive and negative, and provides examples of its application relevant to each client's individual problems. For AA and SNR students who experienced negative treatment and trauma from their parents, the counselor guides them in practicing positive REI, which involves imagining negative thoughts that trigger self-injury and then replacing them with positive thoughts that build self-esteem and acceptance. Meanwhile, for HF and NNH students who are facing romantic problems, counselors apply negative REI by directing them to imagine the bad consequences of self-injury behavior so that awareness arises to avoid and change this behavior. At the conclusion of the session, students were given an REI worksheet to be completed at home as independent practice, which would be evaluated in the third session to identify any difficulties or obstacles encountered during the implementation of the REI technique. The REI worksheet used to support independent practice at home is presented in Figure 2.

Latihan dan Refleksi :

1. Situasi apa yang kamu bayangkan saat melakukan teknik REI?
 Jawaban : masalah belajarnya, waktu dipukul, dibanting, berantakan kamarnya, saat orang tua emosi, dikasih di imbasin ke saya, tidak ingat hari ulang tahun saya.

2. Pikiran negatif apa yang kamu rasakan saat membayangkan situasi itu?
 Jawaban : Menakuti diri sendiri, di asingkan di rumah, menyedihkan diri sendiri, hidup tidak berguna, tidak ada artinya hidup, ingin menyerah.

3. Bagaimana kamu mengganti pikiran negatif itu dengan pikiran yang lebih positif?
 Jawaban : Saya bersyukur karena sudah di banting, dengan mengimajinasikan hidup menjadi saya lebih tenang, atau melepaskan, makan, dan membersihkan rumah.

4. Setelah mengganti pikiran tersebut, bagaimana perasaanmu sekarang?
 Jawaban : jauh lebih tenang dan tidak berpikiran untuk terlalu sering menakuti diri, lebih sering berpikiran positif.

5. Berapa kali dalam sehari kamu berlatih teknik REI ? Teknik positif lainnya?
 Jawaban : belajarnya sehari 9x latihan, terkadang di pagi hari saat bangun tidur, atau di malam hari saat sebelum tidur, atau di sore hari saat pulang sekolah.

6. Apa perubahan yang dapat kamu rasakan setelah rutin latihan?
 Jawaban : Saya jadi berpikiran lebih positif dari sebelumnya karena saya jadi lebih bisa menenangkan diri, saya kalau dirangsang itu gak bersalah, dia himbau, terus juga aku percaya setiap anak itu punya kesungguhan dan ketekunan, dan aku yakin aku bisa melewati masa sulit ini tanpa kasih sayang orang tua.

7. Apakah ada kesulitan saat latihan? Bagaimana kamu mengatasinya?
 Jawaban : ketika mengendalikannya pikiran dan hati saya
 Cara saya mengatasinya :
 - teknik napas lalu buang dengan 3x
 - duduk tenang tenang
 - lalu saya menutup mata saya untuk lebih tenang.

Figure 2. Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) Worksheet for Independent Practice

The third session, the counselor evaluated the client's implementation of the REI independent training at home, reinforced the rational thinking developed, and confirmed that regular REI training can reduce self-injury behavior. The session concluded with a post-test and gratitude for the client's participation throughout the counseling process. After all counseling sessions were completed, a posttest was administered using the same instrument as the pretest. The analysis table and graph (presented separately) show a decrease in self-injury rates across the entire sample after counseling services were provided. The contrast between the pretest and posttest outcomes appears in figure 3.

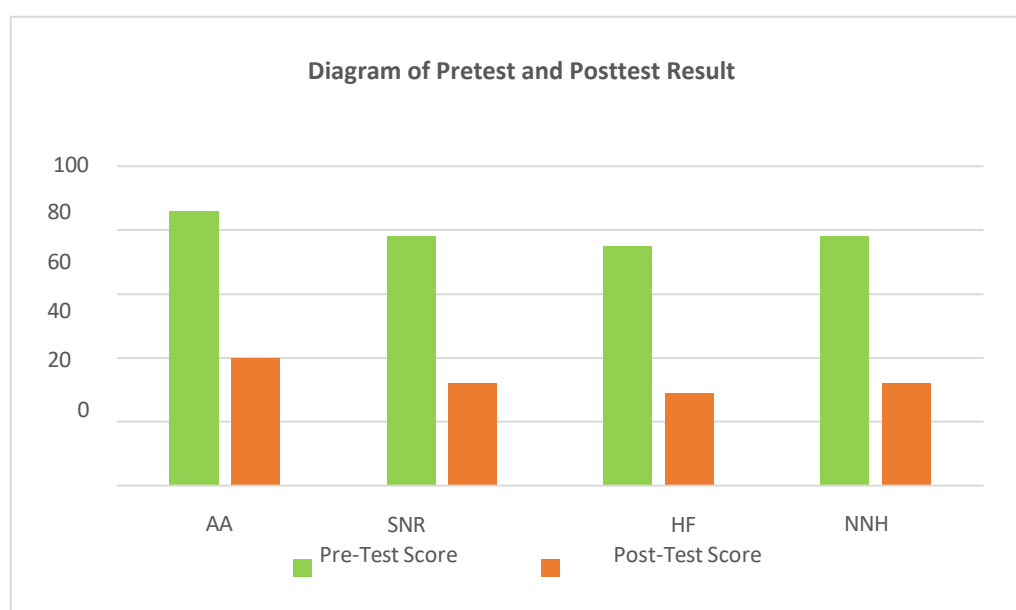


Figure 3. Diagram of Pretest and Posttest Results of Experimental Samp

Generally, the pattern of score changes above shows a consistent decrease in each client, indicating that the REBT approach with the REI technique has a positive effect on reducing self-injurious behavior. Then, after obtaining the pretest and posttest results for self-injurious behavior levels, the data can be analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test. The results of the research data analysis using the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test are presented in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Results of the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Analysis

N				Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
POSTTEST INJURY	–Negative Ranks	4a		2.50	10.00
PRETEST INJURY	Positive Ranks	0b		.00	.00
	Ties	0c			
	Total	4			

a. POSTTEST INJURY < PRETEST INJURY

b. POSTTEST INJURY > PRETEST INJURY

c. POSTTEST INJURY = PRETEST INJURY

Table 4. Statistical Test of Self Injury Pretest and Posttest

POSTTEST INJURY – PRETEST INJURY	
Z	-2.000 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.046

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on positive ranks.

The outcomes of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test shown in the table demonstrate a reduction in self-injury scores across the entire sample after the intervention. This pattern of change illustrates that individual counseling using the REBT approach, specifically the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) technique, had a consistent impact on each student. A significance value lower than the threshold indicates that the difference between pretest and posttest scores is statistically significant, providing empirical evidence that the intervention was able to reduce self-injury behavior. These findings not only answer the research hypothesis but also indicate that the REI technique is effective in helping students manage irrational beliefs and emotional responses that previously led to self-injury behavior. The success of the intervention can be explained by the internalization of the cognitive strategies provided during counseling, enabling students to replace maladaptive thought patterns with more rational ones.

Furthermore, the consistent changes across all participants indicate that this method has the potential to be applied to similar cases, particularly for adolescents experiencing difficulty regulating emotions or a tendency toward risky behavior. Thus, the research findings provide a practical contribution to the development of counseling services in schools, particularly in addressing self-injury behavior.

4. Conclusion

According to the analysis and discussion above, this can be deduced that the REBT approach by the REI technique through individual counseling services has a significant positive influence in reducing self-injury behavior in students. This shows that the application of the REI technique effectively helps students change irrational thought patterns to more rational ones, thus enabling them to manage emotions more healthily and constructively. Therefore, the REI based REBT approach is suitable for implementation as a counseling intervention method in addressing self-injury behavior in adolescents in a practical and impactful manner. The structured three-session counseling, supported by ABCDE worksheets and independent REI practice at home, allowed students to improve emotional control, reinforce rational thinking, and manage distressing situations without resorting to self-injury. These findings provide guidance and counseling teachers with an effective strategy to support adolescents in developing healthier coping mechanisms and emotional regulation.

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How to cite this article:

Utami, C. D., & Siregar, A. (2026). The Effect of REBT with the Rational Emotive Imagery (REI) Technique to Reduce Self-Injury in Class X Students of SMK Negeri 6 Medan. *Journal of Educational Sciences*, 10(1), 1292-1301.
