



# A CASE STUDY ON COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY FOR LOW SELF-ESTEEM: REDUCING AUTOMATIC NEGATIVE THOUGHTS THROUGH SELFAWARENESS DEVELOPMENT

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## Abstract

This study explores the application of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in supporting an adolescent with low self-esteem and frequent automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) through the development of self-awareness. Using a qualitative single-case study design, the subject was a 14-year-old female presenting withdrawal tendencies, excessive rumination, and negative self-perceptions. The intervention consisted of several individual counseling sessions incorporating CBT principles, including establishing a therapeutic relationship, introducing the cognitive triangle (thoughts–feelings–behaviors), identifying ANTs, implementing relaxation techniques, and cognitive restructuring. Data were gathered through observation, semi-structured interviews, worksheets, and projective assessments. The findings reveal meaningful changes in the counselee's cognitive and behavioral patterns. The counselee developed an increased ability to recognize, evaluate, and consciously intervene in negative thought processes, leading to reduced anxiety and improved social engagement. Self-awareness emerged as a key mechanism of change in restructuring maladaptive beliefs and fostering a more positive self-concept. This case highlights CBT as an effective counseling strategy for addressing automatic negative thoughts and enhancing psychological well-being in adolescents with low self-esteem.

**Keywords:** automatic negative thoughts; cognitive behavior therapy; self-awareness; self-esteem;

## 1. Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by identity formation, value clarification, expanding social relationships, and establishing meaningful life goals (Mastorci et al., 2024). During this period, adolescents face significant internal and external pressures, including academic demands, parental expectations, peer influence, and the pervasive impact of social media. These stressors often generate psychological challenges that disrupt identity development and negatively affect self-esteem (Martin et al., 2025; Bibian & Azeqa, 2024). When emotional support from the surrounding environment is insufficient, adolescents become vulnerable to feelings of worthlessness, difficulties in recognizing personal strengths, and tendencies toward social withdrawal, which can culminate in low self-esteem and the emergence of automatic negative thoughts (ANTs).

Low self-esteem remains one of the most common psychological concerns during adolescence and is strongly linked to disorders such as anxiety and depression (Berg et al., 2023). This vulnerability reflects the heightened emotional sensitivity and social pressure inherent to this stage of life, conditions that often give rise to maladaptive thinking patterns such as ANTs. When negative experiences occur repeatedly, adolescents risk developing a diminished sense of self-worth, increased social isolation, elevated anxiety, and even mild to moderate depressive symptoms (Berg et al., 2023). Many adolescents fail to navigate these transitions successfully and instead experience persistent inner conflicts, confusion about self-identity, and feelings of inadequacy when comparing themselves to peers (Hilman, Hafina, & Ilfiandra, 2023).

Self-esteem plays a vital role in psychosocial development as it reflects an individual's appraisal of personal worth and perceived social value (Utami, Wibowo, & Japar, 2020). Healthy self-esteem promotes confidence, positive thinking, and adaptive coping strategies, whereas low self-esteem undermines cognitive, emotional, and behavioral functioning (Wanner & Wanner, 2023). In daily life, adolescents with low self-esteem tend to perceive themselves as incompetent, exhibit hypersensitivity to others' evaluations, and struggle to establish healthy social interactions (Shany Rusfa et al., 2022). They often engage in excessive rumination, withdraw from peer activities, and internalize failures or rejections as personal deficiencies (Salsabila & Fitriyani, 2020). These tendencies frequently activate ANTs, the spontaneous, irrational, and repetitive cognitive responses

that reinforce negative self-beliefs and maintain maladaptive behavioral cycles, ultimately obstructing optimal development (Berg et al., 2023).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) has emerged as a leading evidence-based approach to address such challenges by restructuring negative thought patterns. The central premise of CBT is that cognition, emotion, and behavior are interconnected; thus, maladaptive cognitions significantly contribute to emotional distress and behavioral dysfunction (Beck & Fleming, 2021). CBT facilitates awareness of these distorted thoughts, guides individuals in evaluating their accuracy, and introduces rational and constructive alternatives (De Silva et al., 2024). Through this process, counselees gain greater control over emotional regulation and behavioral adaptation (Karunaratna et al., 2024). In broader context, the belief and related belief system will affect how individual define herself and her life (Hanafi, et al., 2020)

A growing body of research supports the efficacy of CBT for adolescents. Controlled studies have demonstrated that CBT interventions reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, increase self-esteem, and enhance coping skills (Angelini & Gini, 2025; Hidayah, et al., 2024). Internet-based CBT (iCBT) programs have produced similarly strong results, with effect sizes indicating significant gains in self-esteem ( $d = 1.18$ ) and concurrent reductions in anxiety and depressive symptoms (Berg et al., 2023). These outcomes highlight CBT as both conceptually sound and empirically validated, particularly in addressing psychological concerns such as low self-esteem that often stem from dysfunctional social relationships (Beck & Fleming, 2021).

CBT is particularly distinguished by its structured and systematic approach, which employs techniques like thought monitoring, cognitive restructuring, behavioral experiments, and homework assignments to promote lasting cognitive and behavioral change (Branch, 2025). Beck's cognitive triad (negative views of the self, the world, and the future) offers a conceptual framework for understanding and dismantling distorted thinking patterns. Specific CBT techniques, such as identifying automatic thoughts, challenging cognitive distortions, and implementing restructuring strategies, aim to break these cycles while enhancing self-awareness and adaptive thinking (Utami et al., 2020). Empirical work has confirmed the strength of this model. For example, Rani (2022) reported substantial improvements in self-esteem and reductions in negative thinking after eight sessions of group counseling grounded in a combined CBT-Corey approach. Likewise, Berg (2022) found that iCBT delivered to adolescents aged 15–19 produced large effect sizes for self-esteem improvement and alleviation of depressive and anxiety symptoms. Recent meta-analyses and randomized controlled trials further underscore CBT's superiority over less structured therapeutic models (Stenzel et al., 2025; van den Heuvel et al., 2023).

Although integrative frameworks such as Corey's emphasize therapeutic rapport and flexibility, evidence indicates that Beck's structured methodology provides more consistent and replicable outcomes, particularly when targeting automatic negative thoughts in adolescents experiencing social withdrawal and heightened self-criticality (Tattersall, Rolli, & Butwell, 2024; Fernandes, 2022; Cooper et al., 2025). The standardized procedures inherent in Beck's model ensure that interventions remain goal-directed and outcome-focused, qualities that make this approach preferable in school-based counseling contexts where time and resources are often limited.

Low self-esteem and ANTs are critical concerns in educational settings, positioning school counselors as essential figures in prevention and intervention efforts. Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers hold a pivotal role in helping students recognize maladaptive thought patterns, resolve internal conflicts, and develop positive self-concepts (Naomi et al., 2021). However, many school counseling practices continue to emphasize behavioral correction without adequately addressing underlying cognitive and emotional mechanisms. This gap underscores the relevance of CBT as an integrative intervention that is not only corrective but also educational and preventive (Budiasningrum et al., 2023).

A core element in the success of CBT lies in its ability to cultivate self-awareness. By helping adolescents recognize their thought processes and understand their influence on emotions and behaviors, CBT fosters autonomy and equips individuals with the skills to implement change (Mertens et al., 2022). Self-awareness functions both as a mediator and an outcome in this therapeutic process, reinforcing long-term resilience against future stressors. Incorporating models like the cognitive triangle, which illustrates the interplay among thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, further strengthens these gains by making abstract concepts tangible and actionable for young counselees (Ehsan & Siddiqui, 2023). Ultimately, CBT enables adolescents to develop adaptive

coping strategies that extend beyond the immediate counseling context, serving as lifelong tools for mental well-being (Barsei & Atmoko, 2023; Karunarathna et al., 2024).

In real-life contexts, self-esteem often declines sharply following interpersonal difficulties, particularly in friendship dynamics during adolescence. The counselee in this case, referred to as M, initially demonstrated a reasonable level of confidence before encountering problems in her peer relationships. Her friendship with F had provided a sense of acceptance and social support, which was especially meaningful given the limited emotional reinforcement she received at home. Research by Wei Ye (2022) supports this observation, indicating that self-confidence significantly influences the quality of adolescent friendships, accounting for approximately 21.3% of the variance in peer relationship stability. Confident adolescents are generally able to form close, supportive, and trustworthy friendships (Ye, 2022).

However, this dynamic changed dramatically when the relationship between M and F deteriorated. M began to experience feelings of rejection, which triggered pervasive self-critical thoughts. She internalized the conflict, attributing blame to herself and engaging in negative self-talk such as, *"I must be annoying"* or *"No one wants to be friends with me,"* despite the lack of objective evidence for these assumptions. These patterns reflect the development of automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) commonly associated with social rejection.

This phenomenon aligns with findings by Angeline and Gini (2025) and Almeida et al. (2025), which demonstrate that adolescents who encounter friendship difficulties are at higher risk for psychological distress and negative self-perceptions. Consequently, M began withdrawing socially, avoiding conversations, and engaging in repetitive, maladaptive rumination. What was once a healthy sense of self-confidence rapidly declined following this interpersonal disruption. Consistent with these observations, Pollack et al. (2020) report that peer rejection exerts a lasting influence on adolescents' self-evaluations, often contributing to long-term declines in self-esteem. These findings underscore the critical need to understand the mechanisms underlying these shifts and to implement interventions that prevent adolescents from becoming entrenched in cycles of self-deprecation and social avoidance.

Given this context, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) emerges as a particularly relevant intervention within educational and counseling settings. CBT provides structured strategies for enhancing self-awareness, reframing maladaptive cognitions, and restoring a balanced, positive self-concept (Wati, 2025). By equipping students with tools to recognize, challenge, and modify irrational thought patterns, CBT addresses not only the symptoms of distress but also the cognitive roots of psychological problems. This focus enables more profound and sustainable change compared to approaches that target only behavioral manifestations (Martinsen et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study is to explore how CBT can support an adolescent experiencing low self-esteem and recurrent ANTs by facilitating the development of self-awareness and adaptive cognitive strategies. Rather than functioning as a purely remedial intervention, this approach offers educational and preventive dimensions, empowering students to take an active role in their emotional regulation and social reintegration. Findings from this case study are expected to provide practical insights for school counselors and contribute to the development of counseling interventions that strengthen students' psychological resilience and overall well-being.

## 2. Method

This study employed a qualitative research design using a single-case study approach, conducted over a period of two weeks. A qualitative method was selected to allow an in-depth exploration of the process of cognitive and emotional change in the participant before and after receiving Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) intervention. This approach was deemed appropriate as it enables detailed investigation and understanding of the phenomenon in its real-life context (Poltak, 2024). The study involved one participant as the main case subject, referred to as M, a 14-year-old adolescent, the youngest of three siblings, currently enrolled in junior high school (SMP) in a district in East Java. This methodological approach provided a comprehensive understanding of how CBT intervention gradually facilitated the reduction of automatic negative thoughts and the enhancement of self-awareness, contributing to healthier psychological functioning.

### 2.1 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, cognitive worksheets, and projective tools. Interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed

verbatim, categorized, and summarized to extract core themes from the participant's responses. To ensure trust and cooperation, the researcher established rapport during the pre-intervention stage, which included explaining the purpose of the intervention, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring confidentiality of the participant's data. The data was collected via (a) Observation was carried out during the counseling sessions to capture affective and behavioral responses; (b) In-depth interviews explored the participant's past experiences, self-perception, and social interactions; (c) Cognitive worksheets, an integral component of CBT, were used to document automatic thoughts, triggering situations, and alternative rational thoughts developed by the participant; and additionally, (d) projective tools in the form of three visual images were employed to facilitate exploration of self-meaning and personal interpretation.

## 2.2 Intervention Process

The counseling process consisted of several structured stages: (a) Building rapport and therapeutic alliance; (b) Introducing the cognitive-behavioral triangle (thoughts, feelings, behaviors); (c) Identifying and evaluating automatic negative thoughts (ANTs); (d) Emotional regulation through relaxation training; (e) Developing self-awareness and cognitive restructuring through guided reflection and thought-challenging techniques. The intervention aimed to transform maladaptive thought patterns into adaptive cognitions and reconstruct a positive self-concept (Filda & Hikmah, 2023).

## 2.2 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps of reviewing interview transcripts, observation notes, and cognitive worksheets to identify recurring patterns related to changes in thoughts, emotions, and behaviors (Ansell et al., 2024). Key themes included the emergence of self-awareness, shifts from negative to positive thoughts, and improved social interaction. Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods and member checking, allowing the participant to confirm the accuracy of interpretations (Zaeske et al., 2023).

## 3. Results and Discussion

### 3.1 Implementation of CBT and Identification of the counselee's Issues

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) integrates ways of thinking and behaving based on three interrelated components: thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (Mustofa & Nurjannah, 2022). The application of CBT interventions aims to teach individuals new behaviors and strategies to face distressing situations, involving the acquisition of specific skills (Utama & Ambarini, 2023). CBT does not aim to teach positive thinking as a solution to the counselee's problems but rather helps the counselee become aware of and evaluate their experiences and problems from different perspectives (positive, negative, and neutral), enabling them to draw accurate conclusions and solutions (Sari et al., 2021).

Within the CBT framework, emotional and behavioral disturbances often originate from automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) that arise spontaneously and unconsciously (Beck & Fleming, 2021). These negative thoughts are distortive and irrational, and if left unchecked, they reinforce negative core beliefs such as "*I am worthless*" or "*I will definitely fail*" (Karunaratna et al., 2024). Such thoughts form the basis for psychological problems, one of which is low self-esteem that precisely the issue experienced by the counselee in this study.

In this study, the counselee exhibited strong indications of these negative beliefs, rooted in prior experiences and an unsupportive environment. She often felt useless, unworthy of acceptance in social settings, and experienced severe anxiety that led her to withdraw from social interactions. When CBT was implemented, the counselee began to realize that her negative perceptions of herself were not entirely accurate (Juniarn, 2022). This aligns with Beck's theory, which states that when such negative thoughts are acknowledged, examined, and replaced with healthier alternatives, emotions and behaviors consequently shift in a more positive direction.

### 3.2 Counseling Intervention and Cognitive-Emotional Dynamics of the counselee

The counseling process in this study also incorporated a conceptual framework through the visualization of the thought–feeling–behavior triangle, which is a fundamental approach in CBT for explaining the interconnection between these three aspects. Within this triangular model, it is explained that thoughts (cognition) influence how a person feels (emotion), feelings then drive or inhibit behavior (behavior), and conversely, certain behavioral experiences can reinforce or alter a person's thoughts and feelings.

In implementing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) to address low self-esteem in M, the approach was carried out gradually and systematically, emphasizing the establishment of a therapeutic relationship, cognitive exploration, and the enhancement of self-awareness (Kazantzis & Dobson, 2022). The counselee in this study was a female student who previously exhibited typical symptoms of low self-esteem, such as social withdrawal, excessive negative thinking (overthinking), and a self-deprecating perception. These patterns affected her social and emotional functioning, where she often isolated herself and displayed reluctance to interact with peers. The primary issue addressed in this process was the emergence of automatic negative thoughts that influenced the counselee's overall cognitive and behavioral patterns (Yun, Fardghassemi, & Joffe, 2023).

The counseling process began with two initial sessions. The first session focused on building rapport between the school counselor and the counselee. The main goal of this meeting was to create a sense of comfort and safety so the counselee could open up to the process. During this session, the counselee demonstrated considerable openness, although at first, she appeared anxious and guarded. However, as the session progressed, the counselee began to show signs of trust toward the school counselor as a facilitator helping her overcome her internal conflicts.

During the interview process, the counselee (M) revealed emotional and cognitive dynamics closely related to interpersonal and family relationships. When asked about the beginning of her friendship with F, M explained that their closeness began a few months after entering school. She stated that F was the only friend who made her feel comfortable sharing her stories: *"Because F often listened to my stories. She really understood me. At home, if I try to talk, they just tell me to be quiet or even scold me."*

From this statement, it can be concluded that M found significant emotional support from F as a substitute for the family's role as a safe space. When asked whether she felt more accepted among friends or family, she answered: *"With friends, I feel like I exist... that I matter. But at home... they call me spoiled, inconsiderate."*

This interview confirmed that the friendship environment served as emotional compensation for the counselee, and when this relationship became disrupted, its impact on her confidence was significant. When asked to describe her feelings after seeing a picture during the projective test, the counselee expressed a strong emotional response: *"I immediately felt like that picture was me... broken. It can't be fixed. Like my life has been wrong from the start."* This reaction reflects a negative core belief about herself.

When asked further, M stated that these thoughts stemmed from frequent comparisons with her siblings: *"I'm often compared. They say I'm stupid, not smart, that I'll never succeed like my older sibling."*

Even experiences from elementary school still lingered: *"My elementary school teacher once said I'd be a burden to my parents. And for some reason, I still remember those words until now."* and When asked about F, M said: *"I don't really know what she says behind my back. But sometimes I hear people saying she talks bad about me. So that makes me think, oh maybe I really do make people tired of me."*

### 3.3 Analysis of Change and counselee's Experiences

In the second session, the counseling focused on introducing the triangle visualization technique. This technique aimed to help the counselee recognize the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that had previously gone unnoticed. The triangle visualization became an important tool for mapping how her negative thoughts created feelings of helplessness, which eventually led to withdrawal behaviors. During this session, the counselee

began to realize that she often generalized small failures as proof that she was worthless. This initial awareness became the starting point for the cognitive restructuring process.

After the second session, the counselee was given a homework assignment in the form of a worksheet to record negative thoughts that emerged in her daily life and attempt to replace them with more realistic and positive thoughts. This worksheet was completed over one week and then returned to the counselor for analysis. From the results of the worksheet, there was a significant change in how the counselee perceived herself and her environment. The counselee began to realize that the negative thoughts she had were not always aligned with reality, as seen from her statement: *"I started to realize, sometimes I think too badly about myself. Not everyone necessarily thinks like that."*

She began to recognize when negative thoughts appeared, and more importantly, she started learning to respond to them differently. Previously, she tended to let her thoughts spiral until she withdrew socially; now, she could manage her thought patterns in a healthier, more adaptive way. She began saying things like: *"Maybe I'm not completely bad, I just need to practice more."* and *"My friends might not hate me, maybe I'm just too sensitive."* This process shows that the counselee began to experience a shift in thinking patterns from being passive and full of self-critical judgments to becoming more reflective and open to positive possibilities.

Behavioral changes observed after one week of completing the worksheet also showed positive results. The counselee appeared more comfortable in social settings. She no longer sat alone in the corner of the classroom as before but began to mingle, smile, and chat with her friends. The counselor also observed that the counselee displayed a more relaxed facial expression and greater enthusiasm during school activities. This indicates that CBT, through an approach focused on increasing self-awareness, had begun to demonstrate effectiveness in changing the counselee's thought and behavior patterns.

To deepen the understanding of the counselee's cognitive dynamics, the counselor then used a projective test as a form of follow-up evaluation. In this test, the counselee was given three different pictures and asked to describe what she saw and the meaning she perceived in each image. This projective test was intended to explore the counselee's unconscious responses that might not have been fully addressed through the previous worksheet. The results revealed that two of the three images elicited positive responses. The counselee was able to perceive hopeful meanings in those pictures, such as togetherness, strength, and determination. However, one image triggered a strong negative response from the counselee. She stated that the picture seemed to represent herself as shattered into pieces, reminding her of feelings of helplessness and past traumatic experiences: *"I immediately felt like that picture was me... broken. It can't be fixed. Like my life has been wrong from the start."*

At this point, the counselee had difficulty continuing her description of the image. She began to feel anxious and showed signs of psychological distress. Observing this situation, the counselor or researcher immediately intervened with a relaxation technique. The purpose of this technique was to reduce the emotional tension the counselee was experiencing and help her return to a neutral physiological state. After the relaxation exercise successfully calmed the counselee, the test process continued with a reflective approach. The researcher invited the counselee to reflect and consider: *"How would you keep yourself from thinking negatively about yourself when seeing something like this?"*

The counselee responded with a fairly mature understanding. She stated that she would strive to remind herself that everyone has strengths and weaknesses. She realized that no human being in this world is perfect. Beyond that, she began to show a growth mindset by saying that her task was to prove to people, especially those who did not support her interests and potential, that she was capable. This response reflects a cognitive process that had transformed from a teenager filled with doubts and negative thoughts into an individual beginning to construct a healthier and more affirmative self-perception..

### **3.3 General Discussions**

The changes observed in the counselee were not limited to surface-level behaviors but extended to core beliefs and self-values. This process demonstrates that CBT does not merely guide counsees to change their thoughts; rather, it facilitates the reconstruction of a new,

positive, and empowering self-narrative. The self-awareness developed throughout the counseling process became a crucial foundation for breaking the cycle of automatic negative thoughts (ANTs) and fostering a more realistic and accepting self-perception.

The counselee's experience reflects Beck's model comprehensively, progressing from the identification of ANTs to the modification of intermediate beliefs, culminating in the formation of a healthier self-narrative. CBT's impact was not confined to behavioral adjustments but involved rebuilding the counselee's cognitive structure (Hanafi, et al. 2025). This emerging self-awareness further enabled the counselee to manage her emotions independently. The CBT approach proved effective in helping the counselee understand, intervene, and reconstruct deeply rooted negative thought patterns associated with low self-esteem. Through reflective processes, narrative techniques, and the use of structured tools (worksheets and projective tests), the counselee demonstrated a transformation from negative to positive, rational, and self-accepting thought patterns.

Post-intervention, the counselee was able to identify ANTs and challenge them with alternative thoughts. She also began embracing her imperfections and developing self-acceptance, as reflected in her statement: *"Not everyone is perfect, right? What matters is that I first prove to myself that I can."*

Behaviorally, the counselee became more open to social interactions and no longer avoided peer relationships entirely. Interviews indicate a significant shift from cognitive and emotional negativity toward greater self-awareness and rational thinking. Although not completely free from negative thoughts, the counselee demonstrated an improved ability to manage cognitive distortions and a growing openness to healthier self-understanding.

Findings from this study further reinforce the theoretical claim that CBT significantly reduces automatic negative thoughts. The counselee, who previously exhibited cognitive distortions such as overgeneralization, personalization, and catastrophizing, began to develop a more rational perspective grounded in empirical evidence from her own experiences. Additionally, the counselee's active engagement in reflecting on small positive experiences accelerated internal change, enabling her to interpret situations from multiple perspectives rather than through a fixed negative lens. The counselee's response during the projective test illustrated a cognitive shift, as her previously rigid negative core beliefs were gradually replaced by more adaptive intermediate beliefs, such as: *"I'm not perfect yet, but I have the ability to grow."*

This shift aligns with what Aaron Beck describes as a cognitive shift, a fundamental reorientation toward healthier patterns of thought. Moreover, the counselee's self-awareness extended beyond intellectual understanding to emotional insight. She began to process meanings and symbols more constructively. This process indicates her ability that was previously hindered by the dominance of automatic negative thoughts.

In conclusion, grounded in Beck's theory of Cognitive Behavior Therapy and its triangle visualization approach (linking thoughts, emotions, and behaviors), this study confirms the concrete effectiveness of structured CBT interventions. The counselee, who was once trapped in a cycle of negative thinking and social withdrawal, experienced meaningful change following a systematic process of cognitive restructuring and self-reflection. This transformation unfolded gradually through initial assessment, the establishment of a therapeutic alliance, relaxation exercises, and the application of visual and projective techniques. Consistent with Beck's perspective, CBT requires active counselee participation in recognizing and revising distorted thought patterns. In this case, the counselee demonstrated that when provided with supportive guidance and structured opportunities for deep reflection, positive change can occur. The counselee not only began to accept herself but also exhibited an enhanced capacity for realistic self-evaluation and marking an important step toward psychological and functional recovery of self-esteem.

#### 4. Conclusion

This case study demonstrates that the structured application of Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) significantly benefits adolescents with low self-esteem and automatic negative thoughts. Through progressive counseling stages, the counselee experienced substantial

improvements in self-perception and behavior. Exploration revealed that the counselee's maladaptive beliefs were rooted in prior interpersonal experiences and a lack of family support, leading to feelings of worthlessness and social withdrawal. Counseling sessions facilitated cognitive awareness, enabling the counselee to challenge distortive thoughts and replace them with rational, adaptive alternatives. Observable behavioral changes, such as increased social engagement, reflected internal cognitive shifts. Tools like worksheets and projective tests enriched the process, uncovering implicit beliefs and supporting deeper intervention. This study affirms that CBT extends beyond symptom reduction, fostering sustainable cognitive and emotional restructuring. Self-awareness emerged as a critical mechanism for interrupting negative thought cycles and building a more positive self-narrative.

This study's limitations include its single-case design and the absence of long-term follow-up, restricting generalizability and assessment of sustained outcomes. This study had the implications of the value of structured CBT in school counseling, particularly for addressing self-esteem issues in adolescents. Future research should adopt larger samples and longitudinal approaches to validate these findings. Additionally, integrating CBT with family-based or peer-support interventions may enhance its effectiveness and long-term impact.

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