

## The Effectiveness of Therapeutic Approaches for Narcissistic Personality Disorder in Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of various therapeutic methods in overcoming Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) based on study results from Indonesian scientific journals in the last five years. The method used was a literature review of five selected articles that discussed therapeutic interventions such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), self-control techniques, and the Gestalt approach. The review showed that all three approaches are effective in reducing narcissistic symptoms, especially in adolescents and young adults. REBT and self-control techniques proved capable of changing dysfunctional thought patterns, while group counseling with the Gestalt approach contributed to increasing self-awareness and personal responsibility. Although the findings are promising, there are limitations such as methodological variations and the age range of the subjects that pose challenges in applying the results generally. This study contributes to the development of counseling practices in Indonesia and encourages further research with more diverse designs and populations.

**Keywords :** Counseling NPD, REBT, Self-Control, Therapy

### INTRODUCTION

Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) is one of the personality disorders classified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (DSM-5). This disorder is characterized by a persistent pattern of grandiosity, an excessive need for admiration, and a consistent inability to exhibit empathy toward others. Although individuals with NPD may appear confident externally, research indicates that they actually possess fragile self-esteem and are highly sensitive to criticism or social rejection (Wardani & Trisnani, 2022). During adolescence a developmental stage marked by identity formation, emotional fluctuation, and an increased need for social acceptance the early symptoms of NPD tend to emerge more easily, making this age group particularly vulnerable (Santoso & Nurwiyati, 2023).

The increasing exposure of adolescents to digital platforms has amplified the emergence of narcissistic traits. In the digital era, social media has become an expressive space that encourages self-presentation, social comparison, and instant validation. Numerous studies in Indonesia confirm that high social media engagement correlates with heightened narcissistic tendencies, especially when low self-esteem and loneliness function as psychological mediators (Hardika et al., 2019). This indicates that the digital environment plays a critical role in shaping adolescents' emotional and interpersonal development.

Reward-seeking mechanisms embedded in social media platforms such as the pursuit of likes, comments, and followers may reinforce narcissistic thinking patterns repeatedly. These

mechanisms can normalize attention-seeking behaviors and escalate mild narcissistic traits into more pathological tendencies (Sakinah et al., 2019). As adolescents become accustomed to immediate external validation, they may increasingly rely on superficial approval to regulate their self-worth, thereby heightening the risk of developing more pervasive narcissistic symptoms.

In Indonesia, empirical research on NPD remains limited despite its increasing relevance in educational and clinical settings (Susanto et al., 2021). Reports of narcissistic behavior are becoming more common in school counseling services, universities, and psychological practices (Hidayat et al., 2024). However, variations in research design, populations studied, and measurement instruments reveal a clear research gap. Additionally, Indonesia's collectivistic and religious sociocultural context requires psychological interventions that are culturally sensitive and aligned with local values.

Recent findings indicate that untreated narcissistic tendencies can contribute to emotional regulation difficulties, interpersonal conflicts, and long-term psychological distress. Adolescents exhibiting strong narcissistic traits are frequently at risk of experiencing social tension and affective instability, which may escalate into more severe mental health problems in adulthood if not addressed early (Aurilio et al., 2023). This highlights the urgency of implementing targeted preventive strategies and therapeutic interventions.

Several Indonesian studies have explored the effectiveness of therapeutic approaches such as Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), self-control techniques, and group counseling using the Gestalt approach. These interventions have shown promising results in reducing narcissistic symptoms through mechanisms like cognitive restructuring, enhanced emotional regulation, and increased self-awareness (Offando et al., 2022). Despite these positive findings, limited comparative evidence regarding long-term effectiveness and cultural adaptation underscores the need for continued investigation.

Given these challenges and research gaps, this study aims to conduct a systematic literature review of therapeutic approaches for NPD published in Indonesian scholarly journals over the past five years. By synthesizing empirical findings, this review seeks to provide theoretical and practical insights that support the development of culturally relevant, evidence-based interventions. The results are expected to contribute meaningfully to mental health practices targeting adolescents and young adults in Indonesia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Narcissistic Personality Disorder is a personality condition marked by a persistent pattern of exaggerated self-importance, an intense demand for admiration, and a limited capacity for empathy toward others. Individuals who display this disorder often appear arrogant, constantly seek praise, react sensitively to criticism, and tend to manipulate interpersonal relationships for personal benefit. Although they present an image of confidence and superiority, this external mask commonly conceals deep psychological insecurity and fragile self-worth (Akhtar, 1989). The emergence of narcissistic tendencies during adolescence is influenced by the interaction of internal and external factors. Internal factors include unstable self-concept, low or fluctuating self-esteem, and early life experiences such as inconsistent parenting or excessive praise. External factors involve social pressure, demands for self-image construction, and the

widespread influence of social media platforms that facilitate idealized self-presentation, rapid validation, and continuous social comparison (Salsabilla et al., 2023).

Empirical studies conducted in Indonesia demonstrate that adolescent engagement with social media is strongly associated with increased narcissistic tendencies. Young individuals who are highly active on platforms such as Instagram and TikTok often engage in repeated self-image uploading, continuously monitor public responses, and construct idealized digital identities to obtain social approval and recognition from others (Khadijah et al., 2022)

Narcissistic behavior does not merely affect self-image and social presentation but also has serious implications for mental health. Excessive narcissistic traits are frequently linked to emotional instability, interpersonal conflict, and heightened psychological distress. These risks become more pronounced among adolescents whose identity formation and emotional regulation abilities are still developing (Saripah et al., 2023).

Intervention research in Indonesia confirms that Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy is effective in reducing symptoms of *Narcissistic Personality Disorder* among senior high school students. This therapeutic approach focuses on challenging irrational beliefs related to superiority, entitlement, and excessive admiration needs, while simultaneously fostering more adaptive, realistic, and balanced patterns of thinking (Wardani & Trisnani, 2022).

Self-control has been identified as a significant psychological factor that protects individuals from developing excessive narcissistic tendencies. Quantitative research shows that adolescents with stronger impulse regulation, emotional monitoring, and behavioral restraint display significantly lower levels of narcissistic expression, particularly among frequent users of social media (AR et al., 2023).

Humanistic-oriented interventions, particularly those based on Gestalt therapy within a group counseling format, have also been shown to successfully reduce narcissistic tendencies among university students. This therapeutic approach emphasizes present-moment awareness, emotional integration, personal responsibility, and improved interpersonal sensitivity through direct experiential processes (Putri et al., 2024)

Based on current literature, both theoretical understanding and empirical evidence on NPD treatment have significantly contributed to the advancement of psychological intervention practices in Indonesia. The effectiveness of therapeutic methods depends strongly on selecting appropriate techniques, ensuring cultural relevance, and integrating cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual dimensions throughout the therapeutic process.

## METHODS

The study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) based on the PRISMA 2020 framework to ensure a transparent and reproducible process of identifying, screening, and synthesizing relevant studies. The review specifically examined therapeutic interventions for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD) among adolescents and university students in Indonesia. A structured search was conducted in March 2024 using Boolean keywords across three databases Google Scholar, Garuda, and DOAJ. The search terms included “Narcissistic Personality Disorder” and “therapy” and “Indonesia,” “NPD” and “intervention” and “narsistik” and “konseling” and “remaja,” resulting in an initial total of 137 identified studies.

Titles and abstracts were then screened to eliminate studies that were irrelevant, lacked therapeutic interventions, or did not focus on adolescent or young adult populations, reducing the pool to 50 articles for full-text evaluation. These articles were subsequently assessed based on predetermined inclusion criteria publications from 2019 to 2024, written in Indonesian, empirical in nature, involving therapeutic interventions targeting NPD or narcissistic traits, focusing on adolescents or university students, and available in full-text. Exclusion criteria included opinion papers, non-empirical writings, studies without intervention components, articles addressing general narcissism without clinical relevance, inaccessible full texts, and duplicate entries. After applying these criteria, 34 studies were excluded, leaving 5 eligible articles for final review.

All selected articles underwent quality appraisal using the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Tools, which assessed methodological rigor, clarity, potential bias, intervention transparency, and the adequacy of data analysis. All five studies demonstrated moderate to high methodological quality, warranting their inclusion in the final synthesis.

**Table 1. Summary of Included Studies**

No	Authors & Year	Method	Sample	Research Design	Therapeutic Approach
1	Wardani & Trisnani (2022)	Quasi-experiment	12 high school students	Pretest–posttest	REBT
2	Sitorus & Arjani (2023)	Experimental	10 university students	One-group pretest–posttest	Self-control
3	Offando et al. (2022)	Group experiment	8 university students	Group counseling	Gestalt
4	Angi et al. (2022)	Intervention study	25 junior high students	Multistage counseling	Integrative
5	Aurilio et al. (2023)	Observational clinical study	80 adolescents	Cross-sectional	General NPD assessment

## RESULTS

The evaluation results indicate that various therapeutic approaches have been proven effective in reducing symptoms of *Narcissistic Personality Disorder* (NPD) in Indonesia. Counseling using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach and self-control techniques significantly decreased NPD scores in adolescents. The Gestalt approach in group therapy enhanced self-awareness and individual responsibility. Additionally, therapeutic counseling guidance helped address emotional problems related to NPD, and observational studies confirmed the necessity of early intervention. A summary of the results from each study is presented in the following table:

**Table 2. Summary of the results of each study**

No	Therapy Theme	Author (Year)	Subjects (n)	Main Results & Study Quality
1	Cognitive (REBT)	Wardani Trisnani (2022)	High school students (12)	Significant NPD score reduction ( $p=0.000$ ); high effect on irrational belief restructuring (quasi-experimental pre-posttest)
2	Cognitive (Self-Control)	Sitorus Arjani (2023)	TikTok-using university students (10)	NPD score $108.6 \rightarrow 60.5$ ( $p<0.05$ ); effective in reducing social media impulsivity (one-group pre-posttest)
3	Humanistic (Gestalt)	Offando et al. (2022)	University students (8)	Increased self-awareness & responsibility, reduced narcissism (moderate-high effect; group experiment, strong qualitative)
4	Integrative	Angi et al. (2022)	Junior high students (25)	Effective in addressing NPD emotional issues (moderate effect; multistage, adaptable across ages)
5	Observational	Aurilio et al. (2023)	Adolescents (80)	Untreated NPD causes emotional disorders (cross-sectional; high social media exposure moderator)

**From these findings, several aspects can be categorized as follows:**

### **Cognitive Therapies**

#### **Table Interpretation & Findings Patterns**

The table reveals clear patterns: of 5 studies, 3 (60%) demonstrate high effectiveness, especially cognitive therapies (REBT & self-control, consistent in adolescents with  $p<0.05$ ), while humanistic (Gestalt) excels for university students and integrative is flexible for younger ages. Key trend: cognitive therapies most consistently reduce cognitive distortions (2/2 studies), humanistic enhances emotional insight, with no single dominant method due to small sample variations ( $n=8-80$ ).

### **Moderator Variables & Implications**

Age moderates outcomes: adolescents  $<18$  years respond better to structured cognitive/integrative therapies, while students  $>18$  benefit from reflective humanistic approaches. Social media platforms (TikTok/Instagram) amplify NPD, making self-control most relevant ( $>40\%$  score reduction). Therapy type: cognitive for cognitive symptoms, humanistic for interpersonal, integrative for comprehensive needs

Studies employing cognitive approaches primarily REBT and self-control-based CBT variations demonstrated consistently high effectiveness in reducing narcissistic tendencies among adolescents and university students. REBT interventions (Wardani & Trisnani, 2022) showed measurable improvements in maladaptive beliefs linked to grandiosity, while self-control training (Sitorus & Arjani, 2023) proved effective in regulating impulsive behaviors commonly associated with social media driven narcissism. These findings indicate that cognitive-based therapies are particularly responsive for younger populations whose cognitive flexibility supports restructuring irrational beliefs.

Humanistic approaches, especially Gestalt group counseling (Offando et al., 2022), yielded moderate to high improvements in interpersonal awareness and emotional regulation. The therapy's emphasis on present-moment awareness helped participants recognize defensive patterns such as projection and denial. Although effective, the results suggest that humanistic methods may require greater emotional maturity, making them more suitable for university-aged participants rather than early adolescents.

Studies using integrative counseling models (Angi et al., 2023), produced stable outcomes across a broader age range. The multistage structure combining cognitive reframing, emotional processing, and behavioral regulation provided balanced benefits for junior high school students experiencing early signs of narcissistic traits. Integrative approaches appear adaptable, especially in culturally diverse Indonesian contexts.

The table shows that out of the five included studies:

- Three therapies demonstrated high effectiveness, particularly cognitive approaches (REBT, self-control-based CBT) and Gestalt counseling.
- Integrative therapy demonstrated consistent moderate-to-high effectiveness, especially in younger adolescents.
- Cognitive methods emerged as the most consistently effective, likely due to their structured format and clear alignment with measurable cognitive distortions.

Across interventions, several moderating factors influenced outcomes:

- Age: Younger adolescents responded better to structured cognitive or integrative therapies, while older students benefited more from reflective humanistic approaches.
- Media social exposure: Higher social media usage amplified narcissistic tendencies, making self-control interventions particularly relevant.
- Therapy type: Cognitive therapies were most effective for belief restructuring, humanistic for emotional insight, and integrative for developmental variability.

Overall, the thematic synthesis indicates that cognitive therapies show the highest consistency across studies, while humanistic and integrative approaches provide meaningful alternatives depending on developmental needs and contextual variables.

## DISCUSSION

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of various therapeutic methods in treating narcissistic personality disorder (npd) in indonesia. By reviewing five recent studies, this research offers an important contribution to understanding the most effective interventions to reduce narcissistic symptoms in adolescents and young adults.

The research findings show that approaches such as rational emotive behavior therapy (rebt), self-control techniques, and group counseling using the gestalt approach are effective in reducing npd symptoms. The study by wardani and trisnani (Wardani & Trisnani, 2022) demonstrated that rebt can significantly lower npd scores in high school students. Sitorus and arjani (sitorus & arjani, 2023) found that self-control techniques in individual counseling effectively reduced narcissistic behavior in students who use the social media platform tiktok. Offando et al. (Offando et al., 2022) showed that group counseling with the gestalt approach helps university students manage narcissistic tendencies by increasing self-awareness.

Although most approaches show effectiveness, a study by meralda et al (Meralda & Soetjningsih, 2023) found a significant negative relationship between self-control and narcissistic tendencies among millennial instagram users, indicating that increased self-control can reduce npd symptoms. This highlights the importance of individual factors in therapeutic interventions.

A critical synthesis of the research findings shows that each therapeutic approach works through different mechanisms that align with clients' developmental characteristics. Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) is particularly effective for adolescents because it focuses on restructuring belief systems and correcting irrational self evaluations cognitive components that are still highly malleable during this stage of development.<sup>2</sup> Group counseling using the Gestalt approach appears more effective for university students, as this method emphasizes increasing insight and awareness, which aligns with the developmental needs of emerging adults.<sup>3</sup> Self-control techniques in individual counseling also demonstrate strong effectiveness in cases of narcissism related to social media use, such as TikTok and Instagram, where digital impulsivity and online validation-seeking behaviors often trigger narcissistic tendencies.

Despite their effectiveness, the reviewed studies have several methodological limitations. Most studies used small sample sizes, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, none of the studies implemented follow-up assessments to evaluate the long-term sustainability of the therapeutic effects. The age range of participants primarily adolescents and young adults also limits the applicability of the results to older populations.

These findings have important practical implications for counselors in Indonesia. For school counselors, REBT can be applied in both individual and classroom-based counseling to help students identify and challenge irrational thoughts that contribute to narcissistic behaviors. Self-control techniques can be integrated into digital literacy programs to help students manage social media use more adaptively. In higher education settings, Gestalt-based group counseling can be used to foster self-awareness and personal reflection among university students. Furthermore, cultural adaptation is essential in the Indonesian context, including integrating cultural values such as collectivism, politeness, and social harmony to ensure that therapeutic methods are relevant and well-received by clients.

These results have significant implications for counseling professionals in indonesia. The application of appropriate therapeutic approaches can help individuals with npd reduce symptoms and improve their interpersonal relationships. It is important for counselors to consider individual characteristics when choosing the most suitable methods.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of five scientific articles from Indonesian journals published in the last five years, it can be concluded that therapeutic approaches have a significant impact on reducing symptoms of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), especially in adolescents and young adults. Approaches such as rational emotive behavior therapy (REBT), self-control techniques, and group counseling using the Gestalt approach have been proven to enhance self-awareness, emotional regulation, and management of narcissistic behaviors.

These results highlight the importance of structured and evidence-based psychological interventions in addressing narcissistic personality disorder. Each approach has particular advantages and can be tailored to individual needs as well as the socio-cultural context of Indonesia. Counselors and mental health professionals are expected to consider these approaches strategically to improve the effectiveness of guidance and therapy services.

## LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that need to be considered. Variations in methodology, limited sample sizes, and the lack of longitudinal studies may affect the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, most studies focus on specific age groups and have not extensively explored interventions for adult or elderly populations experiencing NPD. Therefore, the results of this analysis should be interpreted with caution and not considered fully representative of the entire population of individuals with NPD.

Further research with more robust experimental designs, larger sample sizes, and a wider age range is needed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of therapies for NPD. Moreover, the development of approaches that integrate local culture is essential to make intervention outcomes increasingly relevant.

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