The Effect of Implementing Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT) on Aggressive Behavior in Physically Abused Children at Sentra Handayani Jakarta

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT) is an innovative psychosocial intervention that integrates the empty chair technique with relaxation methods, specifically guided imagery and deep breathing exercises, supported by narrative guidance appropriate for children. NECRT aims to address aggressive behavior in children who have experienced physical abuse, often rooted in unresolved emotional trauma. This therapy is designed to help clients explore emotions, develop empathy, and foster self-reflection, enabling them to understand the consequences of their actions, reduce defensive mechanisms, and develop healthy conflict resolution skills. This study employed a quantitative approach using a Single Subject Reversal Design (A-B-A). The participants included MRA, ZN, and RA, with observations focusing on verbal and non verbal manifestations of aggressive behavior. The validity of the measurement instruments was assessed using the percent agreement method, and data analysis was conducted through visual inspection within and across conditions.The findings demonstrated that NECRT effectively reduced aggressive behaviors, showing a positive trend in behavior improvement and a maximum overlap percentage between conditions of 28.57%.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Children are a mandate and at the same time a gift from God Almighty that must be protected, because in them are inherent dignity, dignity, and rights as human beings that must be upheld [1] . Children have the right to grow up in a safe, loving environment, and be protected from violence, with the responsibility of protection by parents, family, and society in accordance with applicable laws [2] . Child violence is still a serious issue in Indonesia, including physical, verbal, and sexual violence that often involves people close to the child [3].

According to data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection from the National Survey of Life Experiences of Children and Adolescents (SNPHAR), in 2024 there were 25,559 cases of violence against children, with 4,889 of them being physical violence. Violence against children mostly occurs at home, school, and in

the environment or organization where children interact either with their peers or with someone older than them [4]. The impact of violence on children is not only felt in the short term, but can continue until the child is an adult.

Childhood trauma can disrupt psychological, emotional, and social development that has the potential to affect a child's ability to live a healthy and productive life [5]. Children who are victims of violence tend to experience obstacles in social relationships, decreased self-confidence, learning difficulties, and the risk of engaging in dangerous behavior [2]. The experience of violence that children experience in their childhood can also cause the formation of unfinished business in the child [6]. Unfinished business refers to feelings such as resentment, anger, anxiety, or guilt that are not expressed and are related to certain memories. When not realized, these feelings continue to be carried over from the past, disrupting relationships with oneself and others in the present [7].

Children with unfinished business have difficulty managing their emotions, especially when facing situations that trigger negative memories, thus inhibiting healthy relationships and being vulnerable to conflict due to excessive emotional reactions, such as outbursts of anger, blaming others, or behaving aggressively [6]. Children tend not to be able to manage negative emotions maturely, so they often express them through aggressive behavior [8]. Aggressive behavior is a form of emotional expression that arises from failure experienced which is shown through actions that damage or attack others, both verbally and nonverbally, with elements of intent [9] .

Aggressive behavior in children is formed through observation of models in the family, cultural, or media environment. This learning process involves past experiences, reinforcement, or certain stimuli, such as watching violence on television, peer influence, or direct experience with acts of violence [10]. Aggressive behavior can be managed through displacement by expressing it on safer objects, as well as

through catharsis to release negative emotions within oneself [11]. Aggressive behavior can be reduced through "learned inhibition" and "catharsis." With the roles of top dog and underdog, subjects express emotions, develop empathy, and control behavior independently [12].

Gestalt Therapy, especially the Empty Chair Technique, was conducted at Sentra Handayani Jakarta, which was aimed at children who were victims of physical violence with aggressive behavior. The application of the empty chair technique at Sentra Handayani Jakarta and other practices still needs improvement so that the results are more optimal. The obstacles that arise include the absence of narratives that are appropriate for the child's age, the client's difficulty in understanding and following the process, and the lack of formation of new lifestyle patterns, awareness, and new insights related to client behavior. In addition, the implementation of this technique is often not preceded by a pre-therapy stage to explore the client's problems, the source of unfinished business that triggers aggression, and the emotional recovery process after therapy.

Empty chair technique has shortcomings, such as the difficulty for clients to act as a source of unfinished business, dishonesty about feelings, poor concentration, and unpreparedness to express attitudes or feelings, which hinder the therapy process. Therefore, proper guidance is needed, especially for children, as well as preparation that helps clients relax and focus during therapy [13].

The importance of clear instructions in the empty chair technique so that children can participate fully, feel comfortable, and safe when expressing their feelings [14]. Relaxation therapy helps reduce tension, release hidden emotions, and lighten psychological burdens, so that individuals are ready to continue their activities [15]. Relaxation therapy also supports the management of negative emotions, fosters positive emotions, improves coping skills, and helps solve problems more calmly [16]. Guided imagery technique combined with the deep breathing technique effectively provides

a high influence in increasing a person's ability to perform catharsis during individual counseling because previously the client felt relaxed and calm [17].

Therefore, this research aims to create an innovative approach with novelty to complement the shortcomings and non-optimality of the application of the empty chair technique in children which is developed by adding a guide in the form of a narrative that is appropriate for children and also integrating the Empty Chair Technique with Relaxation Therapy, especially by using Guided Imagery and Deep Breathing Techniques. Engineering in psychosocial therapy conducted by researchers called Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT) which is aimed at child victims of physical violence at Sentra Handayani Jakarta.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Child Abuse

A child abuse victim refers to an individual aged 0–18 years who is at risk of experiencing physical or non-physical violence, exposed to violence within the family or social environment, leading to unmet physical, mental, and social needs. Child abuse encompasses actions that cause physical and emotional harm, sexual abuse, and neglect [18].

2.2 Aggressive Behavior

Aggressive behavior is defined as deliberate actions, either physical or verbal, aimed at causing harm to others or damage to the surrounding environment. These actions are characterized by intentionality and can manifest in different forms, highlighting a purposeful effort to inflict harm or disruption [19]. Aggression is often characterized by a deliberate intent to cause harm, either physically or emotionally, and serves as a mechanism for expressing negative emotions such as anger, hostility, or frustration. This behavior manifests through various forms, including physical attacks, verbal altercations, or other harmful actions, highlighting its role as a response to underlying emotional distress or tension. [20].

One of the factors that can trigger aggressive behavior in individuals is the influence of personal experiences and observations of others or events in their surrounding environment. Bandura, as a pioneer of social learning theory, further explains that aggressive behavior exhibited by children is not solely derived from personal experiences but also results from observing and imitating the behavior demonstrated by others [21].

2.3 Empty Chair Technique

The empty chair technique is a Gestalt therapy method pioneered by Frederick S. Perls, widely known as Fritz Perls. This technique involves role-playing, where the client assumes both their own role and the role of another person or aspects of their personality imagined to be seated in an empty chair. Gestalt therapy focuses on the "what" and "how" of behavior and experiences in the here and now, integrating previously unknown or neglected parts of the personality [22].

2.4 Relaxation Therapy

Relaxation therapy is a therapeutic approach aimed at helping the mind and body achieve a state of relaxation. This therapy involves a gradual or progressive process focused on releasing muscle tension in various parts of the body. The therapy is designed to create a calmer and more comfortable state for both the body and mind [23].

Relaxation therapy incorporates several techniques, including guided imagery and deep breathing. Guided imagery is a relaxation technique that utilizes the power of visual imagination to help individuals create detailed mental images of specific experiences [24]

Deep breathing focuses on regulating breathing patterns as a method of relaxation. In Western cultures, such practices are considered relatively new. However, in Eastern cultures, techniques like deep breathing have been widely recognized and practiced for centuries. This can be attributed to the influence of Hindu philosophers and yoga, particularly the concept of pranayama. In this context, "prana" refers to life energy, often equated with breath. According to this philosophy, controlling one's breath is believed to enable the regulation of life energy [25].

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The development of Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT) integrates Gestalt therapy's empty chair technique with relaxation therapy, specifically guided imagery and deep breathing. This therapeutic approach is designed for children who are victims of physical abuse exhibiting aggressive behavior. Such children often experience unfinished business stemming from past traumatic events, which subsequently manifests as aggressive behavior, causing harm to peers and those around them. The researcher developed this therapeutic approach during the implementation of Psychosocial Therapy Practicum at Sentra Handayani Jakarta, starting with the initial design of the empty chair technique as follows:
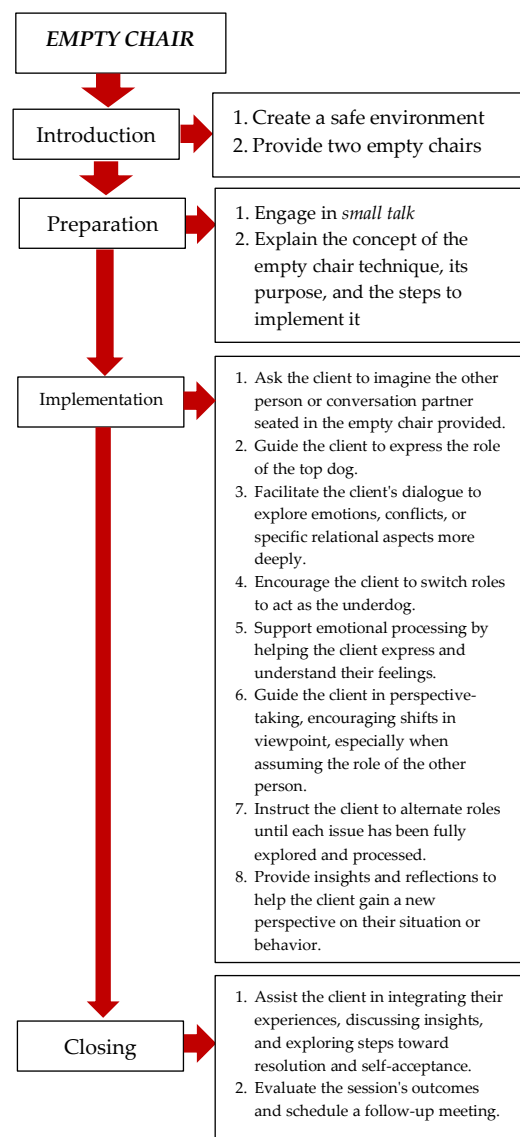
Figure 1. Initial Design of the Empty Chair Technique

The researcher refined the design into a psychosocial therapy innovation named Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT). This method integrates the empty chair technique with relaxation therapy, specifically guided imagery and deep breathing, into a unified approach aimed at reducing aggressive behavior in children who are victims of physical abuse, with the addition of child-appropriate narratives and guidance. The final design of this therapeutic innovation is as follows:
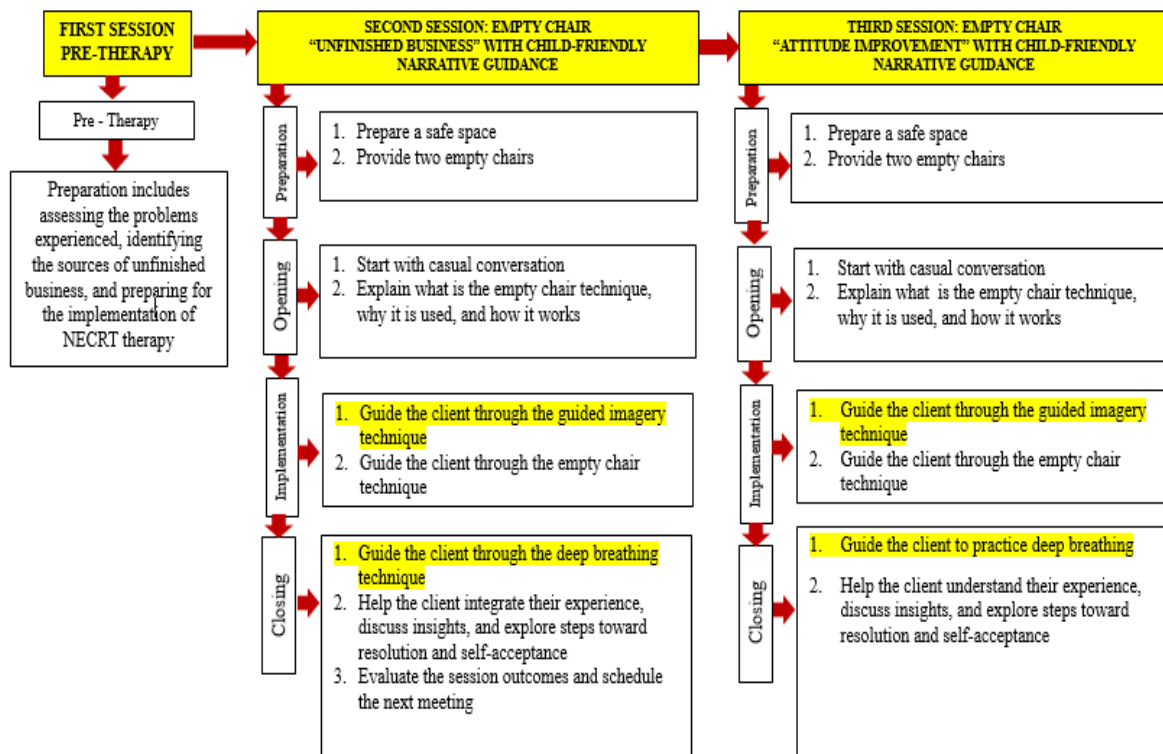
Figure 2. Final Design Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT)

3. METHODS

This study employed a Single Subject Design (SSD) with an A-B-A model to examine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The phases included baseline A1 (5 days), intervention B (7 days), and baseline A2 (5 days). Data were collected through observation and documentation, focusing on verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviors as defined by Myers (2012). Observations targeted three subjects (ages 12–16, male and female), with data analysis conducted within and across conditions to test the hypothesis.

Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT) aims to reduce aggressive behavior by exploring emotions, fostering empathy, and promoting self-reflection. This therapy helps subjects understand the impact of their actions, reduce defensive mechanisms, and practice healthy conflict resolution, ultimately encouraging positive behavioral change.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Characteristics of Research Subjects

Subject	Gender	Age	Problems
MR	Male	12	Exhibiting aggressive behavior and unfinished business with their father and mother
ZN	Male	13	Exhibiting aggressive behavior and unfinished business with their father and mother
RA	Female	16	Exhibiting aggressive behavior and unfinished business with their father, mother and sister

Source: Data from Sentra Handayani Jakarta

The subjects, selected through prior assessment, were victims of physical abuse, primarily showing verbal aggression. Subject MR displayed the highest aggression level. All had unfinished business with their families, particularly their abusers, with aggression often triggered by past abuse-

related reminders. The outcomes of implementing Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT) on the three subjects are presented below:

4.1 Subject MR

OBSERVATION OF VERBAL AGGRESSION IN SUBJECT MRA
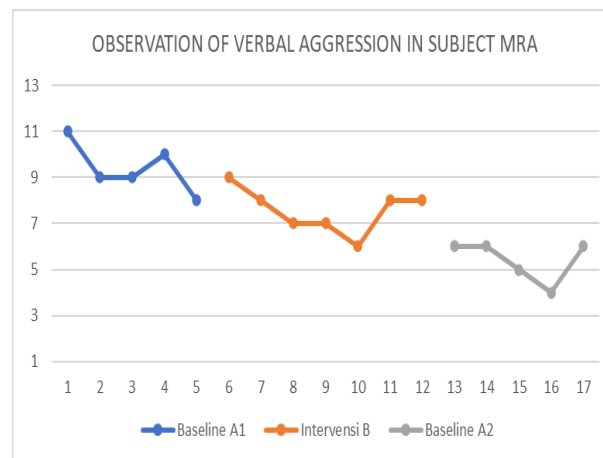
Figure 3. Observation of Verbal Aggression Subjek MR

OBSERVATION OF NON VERBAL AGGRESSION IN SUBJECT MRA
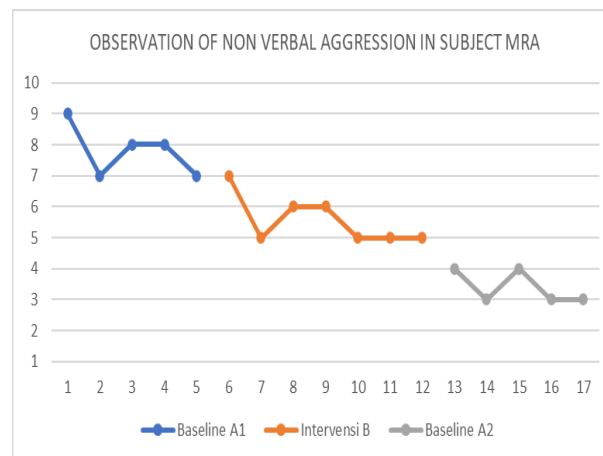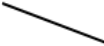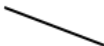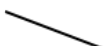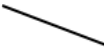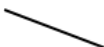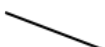
Figure 4 Observation of Non Verbal Aggression Subjek MR

Observations of Subject MR's verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviors revealed distinct patterns. Verbal aggression decreased across phases, starting with 47 behaviors in baseline A1 (5 days), increasing to 53 during intervention B (7 days), and dropping to 27 in baseline A2 (5 days). Nonverbal aggression remained stable at 39 behaviors during baseline A1 and intervention B, then decreased to 17 in baseline A2. These findings show verbal aggression was more prominent than nonverbal aggression in Subject MR.
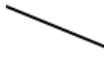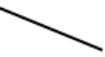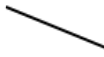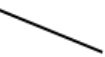
1. **Verbal Aggression Data Analyst**

Table 2. Within-Condition Analysis of Verbal Aggression MR

Verbal Aggression				
No	Condition	A1	B	A2
1	Length of Condition	5	7	5
2	Trend Direction	(+)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend	Variable (60%)	Variable (71,42%)	Stable (80%)
4	Data Trace	(+)	(+)	(+)
5	Stability Level and Range	Variable (8 - 11)	Variable (6 - 9)	Stable (4 - 6)
6	Level Change	(11-8) (+3) Decreased	(9-8) (+1) Decreased	(6-6) (+0) Stable

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

Table 3 Across-Conditions Analysis of Verbal Aggression MR

Non Verbal Aggression				
No	Kondisi	A1	B	A2
1	Length of Condition	5	7	5
2	Trend Direction	(=)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend	Stable (80%)	Stable (85,71%)	Stable (100%)
4	Data Trace	(=)	(+)	(+)
5	Stability Level and Range	Stable (7 - 9)	Stable (5 - 7)	Stable (3 - 4)
6	Level Change	(9-7) (+2) Decreased	(7-5) (+2) Decreased	(4-3) (+1) Decreased

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

The analysis of conditions and inter-conditions in Subject MR's verbal aggression showed a positive downward trend, indicating the effectiveness of NECRT in reducing verbal aggression, with the highest overlap percentage at 14.28%.
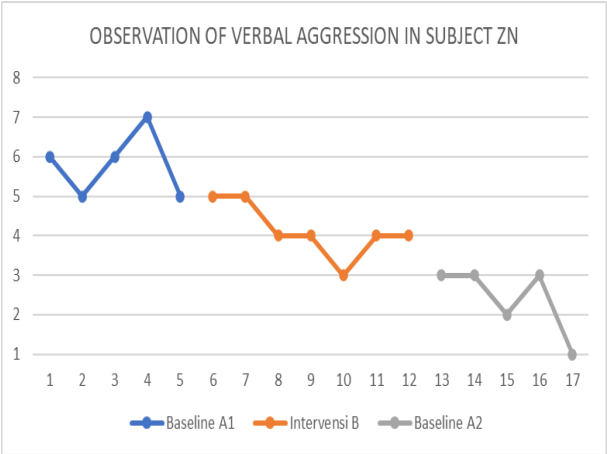
2. Non Verbal Aggression Data Analyst

Table 4. Within-Condition Analysis of Non Verbal Aggression MR

Verbal Aggression					
No	Condition	B/A1 2:1		B/A2 2:3	
1	Number of Variables Changed	1		1	
2	Trend Direction Changes and Their Effects	(+)	(+)	(+)	(=)
3	Stability Trend Changes	Variable ➡ Variable		Variable ➡ Stable	
4	Level Changes	8 − 9 (-1)		8 − 6 (+2)	
5	Percentage of Overlap	$\frac{1}{7}$ x 100% = 14,28%		$\frac{0}{7}$ x 100% = 0%	

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

Table 5. Across-Conditions Analysis of Non Verbal Aggression MR

Non Verbal Aggression					
No	Condition	B/A1 2:1		B/A2 2:3	
1	Number of Variables Changed	1		1	
2	Trend Direction Changes and Their Effects	(+)	(=)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend Changes	Stable ➡ Stable		Stable ➡ Stable	
4	Level Changes	8 − 9 (-1)		8 − 6 (+2)	
5	Percentage of Overlap	$\frac{1}{7}$ x 100% = 14,28%		$\frac{0}{7}$ x 100% = 0%	

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

The analysis of conditions and inter-conditions in Subject MR's non verbal aggression showed a positive downward trend, indicating the effectiveness of NECRT in reducing verbal aggression, with the highest overlap percentage at 14.28%.

4.2 Subject ZN

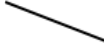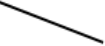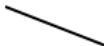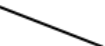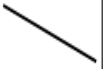Figure 4. Observation of Verbal Aggression Subjek ZN
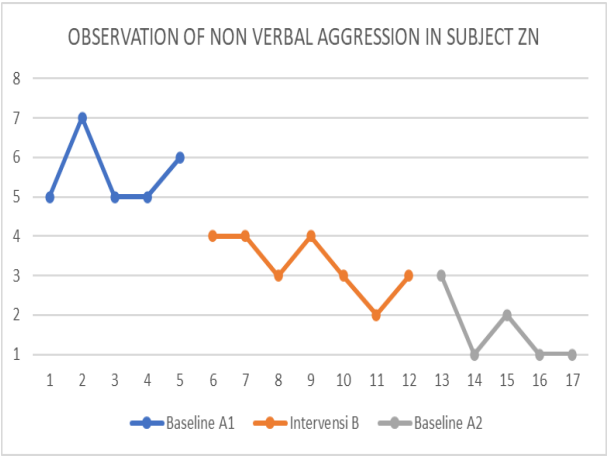
Figure 5. Observation of Non Verbal Aggression Subjek ZN

Observations of Subject ZN's verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviors revealed distinct patterns. Verbal aggression decreased across phases, starting with 29 behaviors in baseline A1 (5 days), remaining consistent at 29 during intervention B (7 days), and dropping to 12 in baseline A2 (5 days). Nonverbal aggression remained stable at 28 behaviors during baseline A1, decreased to 23 during intervention B, and further dropped to 8 in baseline A2. These findings show verbal aggression was more prominent than nonverbal aggression in Subject ZN.
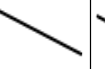
1. **Verbal Aggression Data Analyst**

Table 6. Within-Condition Analysis of Verbal Aggression ZN

Verbal Aggression				
No	Condition	A1	B	A2
1	Length of Condition	5	7	5
2	Trend Direction	(-)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend	Stable (80%)	Stable (85,71%)	Stable (80%)
4	Data Trace	(-)	(+)	(+)
5	Stability Level and Range	Stable (5 - 6)	Stable (4 - 5)	Stable (1 - 3)
6	Level Change	(6-5) (+1) Decreased	(5-4) (+1) Decreased	(3-1) (+2) Decreased

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

Table 7. Across-Conditions Analysis of Verbal Aggression ZN

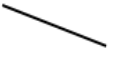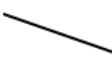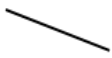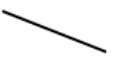| Verbal Aggression					
No	Condition	B/A1 2:1		B/A2 2:3	
1	Number of Variables Changed	1		1	
2	Trend Direction Changes and Their Effects	(+)	(-)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend Changes	Stable ➡ Stable		Stable ➡ Stable	
4	Level Changes	5 – 5 (0)		4 – 3 (+1)	
5	Percentage of Overlap	$\frac{2}{7}$ x 100% = 28,57%		$\frac{1}{7}$ x 100% = 14,28%	
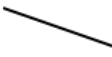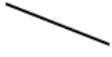
Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

The analysis of conditions and inter-conditions in Subject ZN's verbal aggression showed a positive downward trend, indicating the effectiveness of NECRT in reducing verbal aggression, with the highest overlap percentage at 28,57%.
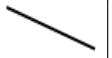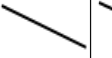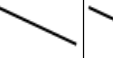
2. Non Verbal Aggression Data Analyst

Table 8. Within-Condition Analysis of Non Verbal Aggression ZN

Non Verbal Aggression				
No	Condition	A1	B	A2
1	Length of Condition	5	7	5
2	Trend Direction	(+)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend	Stable (80%)	Stable (85,71%)	Stable (80%)
4	Data Trace	(+)	(+)	(+)
5	Stability Level and Range	Stable (6 - 5)	Stable (3 - 4)	Stable (1 - 3)
6	Level Change	(5-6) (-1) Increased	(4-3) (+1) Decreased	(3-1) (+2) Decreased

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

Table 9. Across-Conditions Analysis of Non Verbal Aggression ZN

Non Verbal Aggression			
No	Condition	B/A1 2:1	B/A2 2:3
1	Number of Variables Changed	1	1
2	Trend Direction Changes and Their Effects	(+) (+)	(+) (+)
3	Stability Trend Changes	Stable ➡ Stable	Stable ➡ Stable
4	Level Changes	6 – 4 (2)	3 – 3 (0)
5	Percentage of Overlap	$\frac{0}{7}$ x 100% = 0%	$\frac{1}{7}$ x 100% = 14,28%

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

The analysis of conditions and inter-conditions in Subject ZN's non verbal aggression showed a positive downward trend, indicating the effectiveness of NECRT in reducing verbal aggression, with the highest overlap percentage at 14,28%.
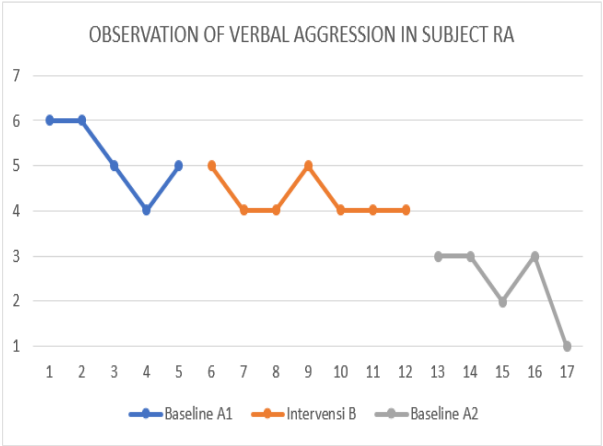
4.3 Subject RA
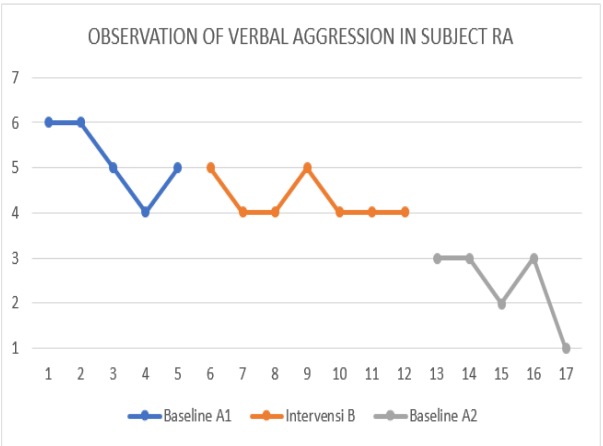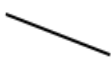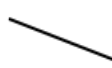
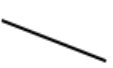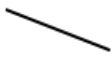Figure 6. Observation of Verbal Aggression Subjek RA
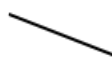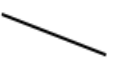
Figure 7. Observation of Non Verbal Aggression Subjek RA

Observations of Subject RA's verbal and nonverbal aggressive behaviors revealed distinct patterns. Verbal aggression decreased across phases, starting with 26 behaviors in baseline A1 (5 days), increasing to 30 during intervention B (7 days), and dropping to 12 in baseline A2 (5 days). Nonverbal aggression remained stable at 25 behaviors during baseline A1, decreased to 23 during intervention B, and further dropped to 7 in baseline A2. These findings show verbal aggression was more prominent than nonverbal aggression in Subject RA.

1. **Verbal Aggression Data Analyst**

Table 10. Within-Condition Analysis of Verbal Aggression RA

| Verbal Aggression				
No	Condition	A1	B	A2
1	Length of Condition	5	7	5
2	Trend Direction	(+)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend	Stabil (80%)	Stabil (100%)	Stabil (80%)
4	Data Trace	(+)	(+)	(+)
5	Stability Level and Range	Stable (5 - 6)	Stable (4 - 5)	Stable (1 - 3)
6	Level Change	(6-5) (+1) Decreased	(5-4) (+1) Decreased	(3-1) (+2) Decreased

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

Table 11. Across-Conditions Analysis of Verbal Aggression RA

Verbal Aggression					
No	Condition	B/A1 2:1		B/A2 2:3	
1	Number of Variables Changed	1		1	
2	Trend Direction Changes and Their Effects	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend Changes	Stable ➡ Stable		Stable ➡ Stable	
4	Level Changes	5 – 5 (0)		4 – 3 (1)	
5	Percentage of Overlap	$\frac{2}{7}$ x 100% = 28,57%		$\frac{0}{7}$ x 100% = 0%	
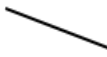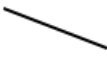
Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

The analysis of conditions and inter-conditions in Subject RA's verbal aggression showed a positive downward trend, indicating the effectiveness of NECRT in reducing verbal aggression, with the highest overlap percentage at 28,57%.

2. Non Verbal Aggression Data Analyst

Table 12. Within-Condition Analysis of Non Verbal Aggression RA

Non Verbal Aggression		A1	B	A2
No	Condition	A1	B	A2
1	Length of Condition	5	7	5
2	Trend Direction	(+)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend	Variabel (40%)	Stabil (100%)	Stabil (100%)
4	Data Trace	(+)	(+)	(+)
5	Stability Level and Range	Variable (3 - 6)	Stable (3 - 4)	Stable (1 - 2)
6	Level Change	(6-3) (+3) Decreased	(4-3) (+1) Decreased	(2-1) (+1) Decreased

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

Table 13 Across-Conditions Analysis of Non Verbal Aggression RA

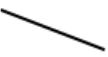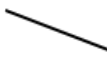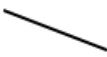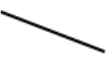| Non Verbal Aggression		B/A1 2:1		B/A2 2:3	
No	Condition	B/A1 2:1		B/A2 2:3	
1	Number of Variables Changed	1		1	
2	Trend Direction Changes and Their Effects	(+)	(+)	(+)	(+)
3	Stability Trend Changes	Variable ➡ Stable		Stable ➡ Stable	
4	Level Changes	4 – 3 (1)		3 – 2 (1)	
5	Percentage of Overlap	$\frac{0}{7}$ x 100% = 0%		$\frac{0}{7}$ x 100% = 0%	

Source: Data Prossesing Result (2025)

The analysis of conditions and inter-conditions in Subject RA's non verbal aggression showed a positive downward trend, indicating the effectiveness of NECRT in reducing verbal aggression, with the highest overlap percentage at 0%.

5. CONCLUSION

This research provides valuable insights into technological advancements in psychosocial therapy. The researcher developed an innovative approach by combining the Empty Chair Technique with Relaxation Therapy, specifically Guided Imagery and Deep Breathing, into the Narrative Empty Chair Relaxation Therapy (NECRT). This method was tested on three research subjects, children aged 12–16 years, victims of physical abuse with unfinished business and aggressive behavior at Sentra Handayani Jakarta.

NECRT aims to reduce aggressive behavior by exploring emotions, fostering empathy, and encouraging self-reflection. Through this therapy, children can understand the impact of their actions, reduce defensive mechanisms, and practice healthy conflict resolution, promoting more positive behavioral changes. Victims of physical abuse participate in role-playing using an empty chair, adopting both top dog and underdog roles, to gain insight into their experiences from both perspectives. This therapy is rooted in Gestalt therapy, specifically the empty chair technique, which has been previously utilized to address aggressive behavior in children and adolescents.

This research confirms findings from previous studies, demonstrating that integrating the empty chair technique with relaxation therapy, complemented by child-appropriate narratives, is effective in reducing aggressive behavior in children who have experienced physical abuse.

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