

Application of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) to Improve Self-concept in a Slow Learner Student

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Abstract

Purpose: To describe the process and outcomes of implementing Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) to support the development of a more positive self-concept in a 16-year-old female student identified as a "slow learner".

Research Methodology: This study employed a qualitative single-case study design focusing on an 11th-grade student majoring in Fashion Design and Production at a vocational high school in Surabaya. Data were collected through interviews, observations, document analysis, and psychological assessments using the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), Sacks Sentence Completion Test (SSCT), and graphic tests, including the Draw A Person Test (DAP), Baum Test (BAUM), and House Tree Person Test (HTP).

Results: The WAIS assessment indicated an IQ score of 77, placing the subject in the borderline category. Following the REBT intervention, the subject demonstrated a shift from irrational beliefs toward a more rational and adaptive mindset, accompanied by an improvement in self-concept toward a more positive outlook.

Conclusions: The findings suggest that adapted REBT shows potential as an approach for supporting positive changes in self-concept among students with learning difficulties. The intervention was adapted using simplified language, concrete examples, and real-life situations.

Limitations: The study utilized a single-case design without a control group, and changes in self-concept were measured using qualitative data rather than standardized instruments such as the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS).

Contributions: This study provides preliminary insight into the application of adapted REBT for addressing negative self-concept in a slow-learning student and can inform inclusive counseling practices.

Keywords: *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy, Self-Concept, Slow Learner*

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1. Introduction

Slow learners are students who experience difficulties in acquiring and processing academic information at the expected pace of their peers, even though they do not meet the criteria for intellectual disability. They demonstrate below-average academic performance and difficulties in information processing, short-term memory, and abstract thinking ([Hermawan & Suparmi, 2025](#); [Triani, 2013](#)). In Indonesia, slow learners can remain unidentified because their difficulties are sometimes misinterpreted as laziness or lack of motivation ([Pertiwi & Harsiwi, 2025](#)). These difficulties become particularly challenging in vocational education, where students are expected to meet academic requirements while simultaneously developing practical and vocational competencies. When students experience a mismatch between their abilities and environmental demands, repeated experiences of difficulty or failure can influence how they evaluate themselves ([McArthur et al., 2020](#); [Yakut & Akgul, 2024](#)).

The psychological consequences of these experiences are important because adolescents develop their understanding of themselves through interactions with academic, social, and family environments. Supportive relationships with teachers and peers provide important protective resources by offering encouragement and opportunities to demonstrate personal strengths ([Andiyanto & Hariri, 2022](#); [Butler et al., 2022](#)). Conversely, when academic performance becomes the primary basis for evaluating students' abilities, students who repeatedly experience academic difficulties can develop negative perceptions of themselves ([Jónsdóttir & Blöndal, 2023](#)). Such experiences contribute to negative self-concept, particularly among students with learning difficulties ([Harter, 2015](#); [McArthur et al., 2020](#); [Yakut & Akgul, 2024](#)). Negative self-concept is also associated with reduced motivation, social anxiety, and avoidance in academic and social situations ([Maïano, et al., 2019](#)). Therefore, addressing negative self-concept constitutes an important component of psychological support for students experiencing learning difficulties.

Self-concept refers to the way individuals perceive and evaluate themselves across different areas of life and is therefore particularly relevant to adolescents' psychological adjustment ([Fitts, 1971](#); [Postigo, 2022](#)). [Fitts \(1971\)](#) conceptualized self-concept as a multidimensional construct consisting of physical, personal, social, moral-ethical, and family dimensions. These dimensions provide a framework for understanding how students evaluate their appearance, personal characteristics, relationships, values, and roles within their families and social environments. For students who repeatedly experience academic and social difficulties, negative experiences can become incorporated into their self-evaluations and develop into maladaptive beliefs about their abilities and personal worth. Consequently, psychological intervention needs to address not only observable academic or social difficulties but also the beliefs through which students interpret these experiences.

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) provides a cognitive-behavioral approach that directly addresses maladaptive beliefs underlying emotional and behavioral difficulties. REBT proposes that psychological consequences are influenced not only by activating events but also by the beliefs individuals hold about those events. Through the A-B-C-D-E framework, individuals identify irrational beliefs, dispute them, and develop more rational and adaptive beliefs ([Ellis & Dryden, 2007](#)). In the context of negative self-concept, this approach directly addresses the cognitive processes through which students interpret academic difficulties, social experiences, and perceived failures. Replacing rigid and self-devaluing beliefs with more flexible and realistic interpretations supports the development of more adaptive self-perceptions ([Cania & Karneli, 2024](#); [Puspitasari & Anganthi, 2025](#); [Yanti & Saputra, 2018](#)).

However, the implementation of REBT among students with learning difficulties requires adaptation to their cognitive characteristics. Students with slower cognitive processing and limited abstract reasoning require psychological concepts to be presented in accessible forms. Accordingly, REBT can be adapted through simplified language, concrete examples, repetition, and situations drawn from students' everyday experiences. These adaptations make the cognitive restructuring process more accessible while maintaining the core principles of REBT. A recent case study demonstrated the application of adapted REBT among adolescents with borderline intellectual functioning in a

secondary school context ([Marsha & Dewi, 2026](#)). This evidence supports the relevance of adapting cognitive-behavioral interventions to the cognitive and developmental characteristics of students with learning difficulties.

Although REBT has been applied to various psychological and educational concerns, research specifically examining adapted REBT for self-concept among slow learners in Indonesian educational settings remains limited. Previous studies have examined REBT in relation to self-concept among adolescents and cognitive-based interventions among individuals with intellectual or cognitive limitations; however, limited research has described how REBT can be adapted and implemented for a student identified as a slow learner who experiences negative self-concept in a vocational school context. This gap is important because vocational students face simultaneous academic, practical, and social demands that influence their perceptions of competence and self-worth.

Based on this research gap, the present study aims to describe the process and outcomes of applying adapted Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) to support positive changes in the self-concept of a female student identified as a slow learner in a vocational high school. By documenting the intervention process and the changes observed following the intervention, this study provides preliminary insight into the practical application of adapted REBT for addressing negative self-concept among students with learning difficulties.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Slow Learner

The term “slow learner” is commonly used to describe students who experience difficulties in acquiring and processing knowledge and skills at the expected pace of their peers. These students generally require repeated instructions, additional practice, and longer periods to achieve similar academic competencies ([Korikana, 2020](#); [Murdiyanto et al., 2023](#)). Previous literature also describes slow learners as having below-average cognitive abilities, with reported IQ ranges generally falling between 70 and 90 ([Hartini et al., 2017](#); [Mansor et al., 2019](#)). However, cognitive ability alone does not fully explain their educational difficulties. Difficulties in memory, concentration, information integration, abstract thinking, learning strategies, and time management can further influence their academic performance ([Triani & Amir, 2013](#); [Korikana, 2020](#)).

The characteristics described in previous studies indicate that slow learners require learning environments that provide concrete information, repetition, sufficient processing time, and opportunities for practice. These characteristics are particularly relevant in vocational education, where students must simultaneously meet academic expectations and develop practical competencies. Consequently, persistent experiences of academic difficulty can influence not only learning outcomes but also students' perceptions of their own competence. [Triani & Amir \(2013\)](#) further emphasize that students' learning difficulties are shaped by interactions between individual and environmental factors, including health conditions, family circumstances, school experiences, and social relationships. Thus, slow learning should not be understood solely as a limitation in intellectual functioning but also as a condition that interacts with students' educational and social environments.

This interaction is important for understanding the psychological difficulties experienced by slow learners. When students repeatedly encounter difficulties in completing academic or practical tasks while being evaluated according to standards similar to those applied to their peers, they can interpret these experiences as evidence of personal inadequacy. Therefore, the educational challenges associated with slow learning can extend beyond academic performance and become relevant to how students perceive and evaluate themselves. This provides an important theoretical link between the characteristics of slow learners and the development of self-concept.

2.2 Self-concept

Self-concept is a fundamental psychological construct that refers to the way individuals perceive, evaluate, and understand themselves based on their experiences and interactions with their environment ([Fitts, 1971](#); [Setiadi, 2019](#)). Rather than representing a single global evaluation,

self-concept encompasses multiple domains through which individuals understand themselves. [Fitts \(1971\)](#) conceptualized self-concept through internal and external dimensions. The internal dimension consists of the identity self, behavioral self, and judging self, whereas the external dimension encompasses the physical, moral-ethical, personal, family, and social self.

The multidimensional nature of self-concept is particularly relevant for adolescents experiencing learning difficulties because academic experiences can influence how they evaluate themselves across other areas of functioning. Repeated academic difficulties can become incorporated into broader self-evaluations, particularly when students interpret academic performance as an indicator of their overall worth or ability. At the same time, adolescents develop their understanding of themselves through social and environmental interactions. Therefore, negative experiences in one domain can interact with perceptions in other domains and contribute to a broader negative self-concept ([Valls, 2022](#)).

Previous research supports the relationship between students' experiences and self-evaluation. [Yakut and Akgul \(2024\)](#), for example, demonstrated the relevance of self-concept to adolescents' behavioral and psychological functioning. This finding is consistent with Fitts' multidimensional framework, which positions self-concept as a system through which individuals interpret different aspects of themselves rather than merely evaluating academic competence. However, existing discussions of self-concept among students with learning difficulties have often emphasized the presence of negative self-perceptions without sufficiently explaining the cognitive processes through which these perceptions are maintained. This distinction is important because identifying negative self-concept alone does not explain how such perceptions can be modified.

From an intervention perspective, the cognitive content underlying negative self-evaluation becomes particularly important. Students not only experience academic difficulties but also develop rigid interpretations of these experiences, such as viewing mistakes as evidence that they are incapable or viewing social rejection as evidence that they are personally inadequate. These interpretations represent beliefs about the self and experiences rather than the experiences themselves. This theoretical distinction creates a direct connection between Fitts' conceptualization of self-concept and the cognitive principles underlying Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy.

2.3 Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), developed by Albert Ellis, is a cognitive-behavioral approach that emphasizes the role of beliefs in shaping emotional and behavioral consequences. Through the A-B-C-D-E framework, an activating event (A) is followed by an individual's beliefs (B), which influence emotional and behavioral consequences (C). The disputing process (D) is used to challenge irrational beliefs and facilitate the development of more rational and adaptive beliefs, resulting in more adaptive effects (E) ([Ellis & Dryden, 2007](#)). [David and Szentagotai \(2006\)](#) identify the transformation of irrational beliefs into rational beliefs as a central mechanism through which REBT produces psychological change.

The theoretical relevance of REBT to self-concept lies in its focus on how individuals interpret experiences and evaluate themselves. [Fitts \(1971\)](#) theory explains the domains through which individuals perceive and evaluate themselves, whereas REBT explains a cognitive mechanism through which maladaptive evaluations can be examined and modified. In this sense, the two frameworks are complementary: Fitts provides a framework for identifying what aspects of the self are negatively evaluated, while REBT provides a framework for understanding how irrational beliefs contribute to these evaluations and how they can be challenged.

Previous research provides empirical support for the application of REBT to self-concept. [Nafisi and Fattahiandabil \(2020\)](#) reported improvements in adolescents' self-concept following REBT intervention. This finding supports the theoretical proposition that modifying maladaptive beliefs can contribute to more positive self-evaluations. However, the applicability of conventional REBT cannot be assumed to be identical across all populations. Students with learning difficulties have cognitive characteristics that require information to be presented in concrete, structured, and repetitive forms

([Korikana, 2020](#)). Consequently, an intervention that relies heavily on abstract reasoning or complex verbal disputation requires adaptation when applied to this population.

The need for adaptation represents an important distinction between the general application of REBT and its application to slow learners. [Marsha and Dewi \(2026\)](#) described the application of adapted REBT among adolescents with borderline intellectual functioning in a secondary school context, demonstrating the relevance of adapting intervention procedures to participants' cognitive characteristics. Taken together, these findings indicate that the theoretical principles of REBT remain applicable while the delivery of the intervention requires adjustment to the individual's cognitive and developmental capacity. Simplified language, concrete examples, repetition, and everyday situations can therefore be incorporated into the disputation process without changing the fundamental A-B-C-D-E framework.

2.4 Theoretical Synthesis and Contribution of the Present Study

The literature reviewed above establishes three interconnected points. First, slow learners experience cognitive and educational difficulties that can expose them to repeated academic and social challenges. Second, these experiences can influence self-concept because adolescents construct perceptions of themselves through their experiences and interactions with their environment. Third, REBT provides a cognitive mechanism for addressing the irrational beliefs through which individuals interpret challenging experiences and evaluate themselves.

Nevertheless, previous literature has largely examined these constructs separately. Research on slow learners has primarily focused on cognitive characteristics, learning difficulties, and educational needs, whereas research on self-concept has emphasized its multidimensional structure and relationship with psychological adjustment. Studies on REBT have demonstrated its relevance to self-concept among adolescents, but research specifically describing how REBT can be adapted for slow learners in vocational educational settings remains limited. The present study addresses this gap by integrating Fitts' self-concept framework with the REBT A-B-C-D-E model and adapting the intervention to the participant's cognitive characteristics.

The theoretical contribution of this study therefore lies in connecting the multidimensional structure of self-concept with the cognitive mechanism of REBT within the context of slow learning. Fitts' framework is used to identify changes across different dimensions of self-concept, while REBT is used to understand and address the irrational beliefs associated with negative self-evaluation. This integration provides a theoretical basis for examining how adapted REBT can be implemented to support positive changes in self-concept among students with learning difficulties.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a single-case study design. The design was selected to provide an in-depth and holistic understanding of the psychological experiences of an individual within her educational context, including the participant's self-concept, irrational beliefs, intervention process, and changes observed throughout the intervention. A single-case study enables the researcher to examine the complexity of an individual case by integrating information obtained from multiple sources and methods ([Miles et al., 2014](#)). The qualitative case study design was considered appropriate because the present study focused on describing the process and outcomes of implementing adapted Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) for a student experiencing learning difficulties and negative self-concept. Rather than examining the intervention through group-level statistical comparisons, the study focused on understanding changes in the participant's beliefs, self-perceptions, emotional responses, and behavior within her natural educational context.

3.2 Participants

The participant was a 16-year-old female student, identified by the initials VN, who was enrolled in the 11th grade of the Fashion Design and Production program at a public vocational high school in Surabaya, Indonesia. VN was selected as the participant based on several characteristics identified

through the initial assessment and referral process. The inclusion criteria were (a) an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score of 77 based on the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), which falls within the borderline range; (b) academic performance below the class average; (c) negative self-concept identified through the initial psychological assessment; and (d) a recommendation from the school's Guidance and Counseling teacher and the participant's parents. The participant was referred by the school's Guidance and Counseling teacher based on academic and social difficulties that had been observed over the preceding year. The identification of VN as a slow learner was based on the combination of her cognitive assessment results, academic difficulties, and observed learning characteristics rather than on IQ score alone. This approach was consistent with the study's conceptualization of slow learners as students who experience persistent difficulties in learning and require additional support to meet educational demands.

3.3 Instruments and Data Collection

Data were collected through methodological and source triangulation to enhance the credibility and depth of the findings. The use of multiple data sources and collection methods allowed the researcher to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the participant's psychological condition, learning difficulties, and changes following the intervention. The data sources consisted of the participant, her parents, homeroom teacher, vocational teachers, and peers. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews, behavioral observations, document analysis, and psychological assessments. The combination of these methods enabled the researcher to compare information from different perspectives and identify consistent patterns related to the participant's self-concept development and learning experiences.

3.3.1 Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted using structured and semi-structured formats with the participant and relevant informants, including her parents, homeroom teacher, vocational teachers, and peers. The interviews explored the participant's perceptions of herself, academic experiences, social interactions, emotional responses, and beliefs associated with her self-evaluation. The interview guidelines were developed based on the five dimensions of self-concept proposed by [Fitts \(1971\)](#), namely physical self, moral-ethical self, personal self, family self, and social self. Interviews with significant others were used to obtain additional perspectives regarding the participant's academic functioning, social relationships, and behavioral patterns.

3.3.2 Behavioral Observation

Behavioral observations were conducted in the classroom during both theoretical and practical learning activities, during break periods, and during the administration of psychological assessments. The observations focused on the participant's social behavior, emotional responses, participation in academic and non-academic activities, and behavioral responses to learning situations. Observation data were used to complement information obtained from interviews and to provide contextual information regarding the participant's behavior within the school environment.

3.3.3 Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted using academic reports, Guidance and Counseling records, and school assignment results. These documents were reviewed to obtain relevant information regarding the participant's academic performance, learning patterns, behavioral characteristics, and educational development within the school context. The document review also served as supporting evidence to complement the interview and observation data, allowing the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the participant's learning difficulties, academic challenges, and changes during the intervention process.

3.3.4 Psychological Assessment

Psychological assessment consisted of the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), Sack Sentence Completion Test (SSCT), and graphic tests, including the Draw-A-Person (DAP), BAUM Tree Test, and House-Tree-Person (HTP). The WAIS was administered to assess the participant's intellectual functioning. The SSCT was used to explore conflicts, needs, attitudes toward herself, and perceptions

of her environment. The graphic tests were used as supplementary assessment methods to explore personality dynamics, self-perception, and perceptions of the environment. The psychological assessment results were integrated with interview, observation, and document data to develop a comprehensive understanding of the participant's psychological condition and to identify the cognitive and self-concept-related difficulties addressed through the intervention.

3.4 Procedure of REBT Intervention

The adapted REBT intervention was conducted through four individual counseling sessions over four consecutive weeks, with one session conducted each week. Each session lasted approximately 60 minutes and was conducted face-to-face in the school counseling room. The intervention followed the principles of the REBT A-B-C-D-E framework and was adapted to the participant's cognitive characteristics through simplified explanations, concrete examples, repetition, and discussion of situations drawn from the participant's personal experiences. The intervention was conducted sequentially, beginning with the identification of irrational beliefs, followed by disputation of these beliefs, development of rational and adaptive beliefs, and application and maintenance of the newly developed beliefs. The objectives, activities, intervention techniques, and targeted changes for each session are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Procedure of adapted REBT intervention

Session	Objective	Activities and Intervention Techniques	Targeted Change	Duration & Setting
Session 1: Identification of Irrational Beliefs	To help the participant understand the relationship between events, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors and to identify negative thoughts and beliefs related to herself.	Individual counseling using simple psychoeducation on the rational-emotive approach and analysis of the A-B-C framework (<i>activating event, belief, consequence</i>). The participant was guided to identify events that triggered negative thoughts and to explore the emotional and behavioral consequences associated with these beliefs.	The participant identifies the relationship between events, beliefs, emotional consequences, and behaviors and recognizes negative beliefs concerning herself.	±60 minutes; school counseling room
Session 2: Disputation of Irrational Beliefs	To help the participant recognize and challenge irrational beliefs underlying her negative self-concept.	Individual counseling using cognitive disputation (<i>disputing irrational beliefs</i>) through simple questions, concrete examples, evidence, and discussion of the participant's personal experiences.	The participant recognizes irrational beliefs and begins to evaluate negative thoughts about herself using more realistic and rational perspectives.	±60 minutes; school counseling room
Session 3: Development of Rational and Adaptive Beliefs	To help the participant develop rational, realistic, and adaptive beliefs regarding her abilities and personal worth.	Individual counseling focusing on the development of <i>effective new beliefs</i> and <i>rational self-statements</i> . The participant was guided to formulate alternative beliefs that were realistic, flexible, and supportive of a more positive evaluation of herself.	The participant develops rational and adaptive beliefs and formulates rational self-statements regarding her abilities and personal worth.	±60 minutes; school counseling room

Session	Objective	Activities and Intervention Techniques	Targeted Change	Duration & Setting
Session 4: Application and Maintenance of Rational Beliefs	To help the participant apply rational beliefs in everyday situations and maintain the positive changes achieved during the intervention.	Individual counseling involving reinforcement of rational and adaptive beliefs, evaluation of changes experienced throughout the intervention, and development of a follow-up plan for maintaining adaptive beliefs and preventing relapse.	The participant applies rational beliefs to everyday situations, recognizes changes in her self-evaluation, and develops a plan to maintain adaptive beliefs.	±60 minutes; school counseling room

The first session focused on helping the participant recognize the relationship between an activating event, her beliefs about the event, and the resulting emotional and behavioral consequences. The second session focused on examining and disputing irrational beliefs through simple questions, concrete examples, evidence, and discussion of personal experiences. In the third session, the participant was guided to develop alternative rational and adaptive beliefs and formulate rational self-statements concerning her abilities and personal worth. The fourth session focused on strengthening these rational beliefs, evaluating changes experienced throughout the intervention, and developing a follow-up plan to maintain adaptive beliefs and prevent relapse.

Throughout the intervention, the delivery of REBT was adjusted to the participant's cognitive characteristics. Psychological concepts were presented using simplified language and concrete examples relevant to the participant's everyday experiences. Repetition and guided questioning were used to facilitate the participant's understanding of the relationship between beliefs, emotional responses, and behavior. These adaptations were applied while maintaining the core principles of the REBT A-B-C-D-E framework.

3.5 Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using the three-stage data analysis model described by [Miles et al. \(2014\)](#): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. First, data reduction involved selecting, organizing, and summarizing information relevant to the research objectives. Data from interviews, observations, documents, psychological assessments, and the REBT intervention process were organized according to the participant's psychological condition, irrational beliefs, self-concept, and changes observed throughout the intervention. Second, data display involved organizing the reduced data into narrative descriptions and thematic matrices. The data were compared across sources to identify consistent patterns and changes in the participant's beliefs, self-perceptions, emotional responses, and behavior. Third, conclusion drawing and verification involved identifying patterns and interpreting changes across the intervention process. The analysis focused particularly on two themes, such as changes from irrational to rational and adaptive beliefs and changes in the three dimensions of self-concept proposed by [Fitts \(1971\)](#), namely physical, personal, and social self. The interpretation of changes was based on convergence across interview data, behavioral observations, and information obtained during the intervention. Changes were interpreted within the context of the individual case rather than as evidence of generalizable causal effects across a broader population ([Ristianto & Jatnika, 2023](#)).

3.6 Data Validation

The credibility of the findings was strengthened through source and methodological triangulation. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from the participant, parents, teachers, and peers. Methodological triangulation involved comparing information obtained through interviews, behavioral observations, document analysis, and psychological assessments. Member checking was also conducted by reconfirming the researcher's interpretations with the participant to ensure that the interpretation of her experiences was consistent with her understanding. In addition, peer debriefing

was conducted through discussions with the supervising lecturer, while consultation with the school's Guidance and Counseling teacher was used to obtain additional contextual perspectives regarding the participant's academic and social functioning. These procedures were used to strengthen the credibility and consistency of the qualitative interpretation and to reduce the possibility that the findings reflected only a single source or method of data collection ([Agustin, Sugiarti, & Suhariadi, 2024](#); [Daralita, Agustriyani, Damayanti, Probo, & Mukhlis, 2023](#); [Wanabuliandari, Wardono, Susilo, Bintoro, & Mariani, 2025](#))

3.7 Research Ethics

This study obtained ethical approval and formal authorization from the participating school. Written informed consent was obtained from the participant's parents, and the participant also provided assent after receiving an explanation of the study objectives, procedures, potential involvement, and her right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. The confidentiality of the participant's identity was maintained throughout the research process. The participant was identified using the initials VN, and personally identifiable information was excluded from the manuscript. Data obtained during interviews, psychological assessments, observations, and intervention sessions were treated confidentially and were used solely for the purposes of the study.

4. Results and Discussions

VN was a 16-year-old female student enrolled in the 11th grade of the Fashion Design and Production program at a public vocational high school in Surabaya. A comprehensive psychological assessment was conducted using interviews, behavioral observations, document analysis, and psychological assessments. The findings provided an initial description of VN's intellectual functioning, academic performance, social and behavioral functioning, and self-concept.

4.1 Initial Assessment Results

Table 2. Psychologist assessment

No	Aspects	Result
1	Intellectual	Based on the WAIS, VN obtained an IQ score of 77, which falls within the borderline range. Her Verbal IQ was 80 (lower-average range), while her Performance IQ was 75 (borderline range). The findings indicate limitations in problem-solving and adaptation to environmental demands. VN demonstrated relatively better performance on theoretical tasks than on practical tasks.
2	Academics	Most of VN assignment and mid-term examination scores were below the class average. Her average assignment score was 60, while her average mid-term examination score was 47.
3	Social and Behavior	Classroom observations indicated that VN was passive during learning activities, rarely asked or responded to teachers' questions, hesitated when invited to the front of the class, and frequently appeared confused. During breaks, she tended to remain at her desk, rarely went to the canteen, and had limited interaction with classmates. During practical sessions, she tended to observe her classmates rather than initiate tasks or offer assistance and generally began working after receiving direct instructions. An interview with the class monitor indicated that VN frequently expressed negative self-evaluations, including statements such as "I can't do it," "Mine wrong," and "My work's rubbish."
4	Self-concept	Based on Fitts (1971) framework and the integration of interview, observation, and psychological assessment data, VN demonstrated negative self-concept in three dimensions: physical self, personal self, and social self.
5	SSCT	The SSCT indicated a positive relationship with her mother as her primary attachment figure and emotional distance from her father. Findings from the BAUM, DAP, and HTP were consistent with themes of fear of failure and feelings of inferiority.

Table 2 presents the results of the initial psychological assessment conducted to identify VN's cognitive, academic, social, behavioral, and self-concept conditions before the REBT intervention. The findings indicate that VN's difficulties were multidimensional and extended beyond academic

performance. Based on the WAIS assessment, VN obtained an IQ score of 77, placing her in the borderline range, which reflected limitations in problem-solving, adaptation, and practical task performance. These cognitive characteristics were consistent with her academic difficulties, as indicated by assignment and examination scores below the class average. Classroom observations and interviews further revealed passive learning behavior, limited social interaction, dependence on direct instructions, and frequent negative self-statements reflecting low confidence and negative self-evaluation. Furthermore, the assessment of self-concept based on [Fitts \(1971\)](#) framework showed difficulties in the physical self, personal self, and social self dimensions, while the SSCT, BAUM, DAP, and HTP results indicated themes of fear of failure, feelings of inferiority, and emotional concerns. Overall, the assessment results demonstrate that VN's challenges involved interconnected cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and social aspects, providing the foundation for implementing an adapted REBT intervention to improve rational thinking patterns and develop a more positive self-concept.

4.2 REBT Intervention

The changes observed following the four-session REBT intervention were analyzed by comparing VN's initial condition with her condition after the intervention. The analysis focused on the three dimensions of self-concept that demonstrated negative characteristics during the initial assessment: physical self, personal self, and social self.

Table 3. Changes in self-concept results

Self-concept Dimension	Initial Condition	Changes Observed After Intervention	Qualitative Evidence
Physical self	VN perceived herself as unattractive and refused to have photographs taken with other people.	VN demonstrated a more positive perception of her physical appearance. She became more comfortable having photographs taken with others and showed greater interest in her appearance and personal care.	The change was reflected in VN increased willingness to take photographs with others, as well as her greater attention to her appearance and self-care. In addition, VN stated that "I am beautiful in my own way."
Personal self	VN perceived herself as different from her peers, considered herself unintelligent, and believed that she frequently failed and was unable to achieve success.	VN began to evaluate herself in a more positive and realistic manner. She was able to identify personal strengths and recall previous achievements. She no longer consistently described herself as a failure and demonstrated greater confidence in her abilities.	The change was reflected in VN ability to identify her strengths, recall previous achievements, and respond to difficulties with more adaptive self-evaluations during and after the intervention. VN also stated, "I can, I am capable, I am trying, and I have succeeded before."
Social self	VN believed that her classmates did not like her, felt that she had no close friends, and generally preferred to remain alone.	VN demonstrated more positive social engagement. She interacted with classmates, including talking, laughing, eating together at the canteen, and visiting the mosque with friends. She also no longer consistently interpreted her peer relationships as evidence that her classmates disliked her.	The change was supported by behavioral observations of increased interaction and participation with peers in several school contexts.

Table 3 presents the changes in VN's self-concept following the four-session adapted REBT intervention by comparing her initial psychological condition with the condition observed after the intervention. The results indicate positive developments across the three dimensions of self-concept,

namely physical self, personal self, and social self. In the physical self dimension, VN showed improvement in accepting her appearance and developing a more positive perception of herself, as reflected in her increased willingness to take photographs with others and pay greater attention to personal care. In the personal self dimension, VN demonstrated a shift from negative self-evaluation and irrational beliefs toward more realistic and adaptive thoughts by recognizing her strengths, recalling previous achievements, and developing greater confidence in her abilities. Meanwhile, in the social self dimension, VN showed increased social engagement through improved interaction with peers and reduced assumptions that others disliked her. These changes were supported not only by VN's verbal expressions but also by behavioral observations during the intervention process. Overall, the findings suggest that the adapted REBT intervention contributed to reducing negative self-perceptions and promoting a more positive self-concept through changes in cognitive patterns, emotional responses, and social behaviors.

4.3 Qualitative Changes Following Adapted REBT

The findings indicated positive qualitative changes in VN's self-concept following the four-session adapted REBT intervention. Changes were observed across the physical, personal, and social dimensions identified during the initial assessment. Regarding the physical self, VN became more comfortable having photographs taken with others and demonstrated greater attention to her appearance and self-care. She also expressed a more positive evaluation of her appearance by stating that she was *"beautiful in her own way."* These changes suggest a shift from avoidance and negative self-evaluation toward greater acceptance of her physical self. Regarding the personal self, the observed changes were closely related to the central cognitive targets of REBT. Initially, VN evaluated herself as unintelligent, unsuccessful, and incapable.

Following the intervention, she demonstrated greater ability to identify her strengths and recall previous achievements. She also became less likely to define herself globally as a failure. Her emerging rational self-statements included, *"I can, I am capable, I am trying, and I have succeeded before."* This pattern is consistent with the REBT principle that challenging rigid and irrational self-evaluations may facilitate more flexible and realistic interpretations of personal experiences ([Ellis & Dryden, 2007](#); [David & Szentagotai, 2006](#)). Changes in the social self were particularly observable through VN's interactions with peers. Initially, she tended to remain alone during breaks and believed that her classmates did not like her. Following the intervention, she was observed talking and laughing with classmates, eating together at the canteen, and visiting the mosque with friends. These behavioral observations provide qualitative evidence of increased social engagement and are consistent with the positive changes reported in her social self-perception. The convergence between changes in self-evaluation and behavioral observations strengthens the interpretation of these findings. Rather than relying solely on VN's subjective reports, the analysis incorporated observable behavioral changes and information obtained from multiple sources.

4.4 Theoretical Interpretation of the REBT Process

The observed changes can be understood through the integration of Fitts' self-concept theory and the REBT framework. The domains in which VN evaluated herself negatively, whereas REBT provides a framework for understanding how the beliefs underlying these evaluations could be examined and challenged. At the beginning of the intervention, VN's statements reflected rigid self-evaluations, particularly regarding competence and failure. Through the A-B-C analysis, she was guided to distinguish between an activating event, the belief attached to that event, and its emotional and behavioral consequences. The subsequent disputation process challenged the assumption that experiencing academic difficulty necessarily indicated personal inadequacy. The development of rational self-statements subsequently provided VN with an alternative way to evaluate herself. Rather than interpreting mistakes or difficulties as evidence of personal incapability, she was encouraged to consider her actual abilities, previous achievements, and the specific characteristics of the task. This process is theoretically consistent with REBT's emphasis on replacing irrational and rigid beliefs with more rational and flexible beliefs ([Ellis & Dryden, 2007](#)).

The observed findings are also consistent with previous research reporting positive changes in self-concept following REBT interventions among adolescents ([Setyowati & Suwarjo, 2021](#)). In addition, [Marsha and Dewi \(2026\)](#) reported the application of adapted REBT among adolescents with borderline intellectual functioning, highlighting the importance of adapting intervention delivery to participants' cognitive characteristics. The present case further illustrates how REBT principles can be operationalized through simplified language, concrete examples, repetition, and personally relevant situations for a student experiencing learning difficulties in a vocational school. The observed changes across the physical, personal, and social dimensions of self-concept suggest that cognitive restructuring may be accompanied by changes in self-evaluation and social engagement. Nevertheless, these findings should be interpreted as qualitative changes observed within the individual case rather than as evidence of a causal treatment effect.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Conclusion

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the application of an adapted form of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) has proven effective in improving self-concept among slow learners. The research subject, VN, demonstrated a significant shift from a negative to a more positive self-concept across all three aspects (physical, personal and social) after participating in four intervention sessions. The shift from irrational to rational beliefs is reflected in the transformation of negative statements into more positive and realistic ones. Behaviorally, VN demonstrated a meaningful increase in social interaction and a willingness to ask questions and seek help in an academic context. These findings suggest that REBT, adapted to the cognitive characteristics of slow learners (simplified language, concrete examples, and a focus on real-life experiences), is a practical and effective alternative intervention in an educational context, particularly for improving the self-concept of slow learner.

5.2 Research Limitations

This study has several limitations. Firstly, the single-case study design without a control group limits the generalisability of the findings; consequently, the results cannot be broadly applied to the diverse population of slow learners. Secondly, changes in self-concept were measured using qualitative data without the use of standardized instruments such as the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale (TSCS); consequently, the extent of these changes could not be measured quantitatively with precision.

5.3 Suggestions and Directions for Future Research

For future researchers, these findings provide a foundation for further investigation of adapted Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) among students with learning difficulties. Future studies are encouraged to employ experimental or quasi-experimental designs involving larger samples and control groups to examine the effectiveness of adapted REBT more systematically. The use of standardized instruments, such as validated self-concept scales, is also recommended to provide quantitative evidence regarding changes in students' self-concept before and after intervention. In addition, longitudinal studies are needed to examine whether the positive changes achieved through REBT can be maintained over a longer period.

Future research may also explore the adaptation of REBT across different educational levels, types of learning difficulties, and cultural contexts to determine the broader applicability of this intervention approach. Studies involving collaboration among psychologists, school counselors, teachers, and parents are also recommended to develop more comprehensive intervention models that integrate psychological support with educational strategies. Furthermore, future researchers may investigate other psychological factors, such as academic motivation, self-efficacy, emotional regulation, and social adjustment, to provide a more holistic understanding of how adapted REBT contributes to the psychological development of students with learning difficulties.

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Author Contributions

The author was responsible for conceptualization, research design, data collection, psychological assessment, implementation of the REBT intervention, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and manuscript preparation. The author also conducted the literature review, developed the research framework, and revised the manuscript based on academic feedback. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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