



Declutter Challenge: Decluttering as a Method to Decrease the Tendency of Hoarding in Teenagers

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Abstract. Individuals with hoarding disorder tendencies can be identified as teenagers and get worse as adults. This study aimed to test the Declutter Challenge intervention in reducing hoarding disorder tendencies using a quasi-experimental approach. Thirty-one teenagers involved in this study screened by the hoarding tendencies screening tool administered online who have hoarding disorder tendencies at moderate to high level. The selection of participants into control and experiment groups was conducted nonrandomized. Data collection methods used observation, interviews, and the Saving Inventory-Revised scale ($\alpha = 0.93$ and test-retest reliability $r = 0.86$), Hoarding Rating Scale ($\alpha = 0.92$), and Clutter Image Rating ($\alpha = 0.82$). The t-test was used to examine the differences in saving inventory-revised scale scores during the pretest, posttest and follow-up both for experimental and control groups. The results of the experiment group after being treated reported significantly lower levels of hoarding disorder tendencies than the control group ($p < 0.05$). There was a significant difference in gained scores between the control group and the experimental group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Declutter Challenge could help reduce hoarding disorder tendencies. Moreover, a qualitative analysis indicated that several behavioral patterns were found related to hoarding indicators. Besides, the participants felt relieved and happy because they were able to sort and put away items wisely.

Keywords: Hoarding Disorder, Decluttering, Minimalist Game, Journaling, Challenge.

1. Introduction

Collecting items that have memories is a normal thing to do; however, it is not uncommon for individuals to continue to buy and keep items that are not needed for a long period. This behavior refers to an act of hoarding items which can lead to hoarding disorder. Currently, many individuals are not aware that hoarding behavior is one of psychological disorders. The term hoarding disorder is still scarce to be discussed, especially in Indonesia context. DSM V states that this behavior is classified as obsessive-compulsive disorder which is

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characterized by an excessive desire to obtain things [1]. Hoarding disorder is characterized by persistent difficulty throwing away or parting with possessions.

Hoarding disorder is a disorder in which a person finds it difficult to let go or throw away the things they own because they have an emotional attachment. Besides, it is also said to be a disorder that is shown through the behavior of collecting used and unused objects, so that they become very difficult to let go of [2]. A person is said to be experiencing hoarding disorder if they find it difficult to part with an item they own due to attachment to the object, even though it has no use value or has not been used for a long time [3]. Individuals with hoarding disorder are characterized by feelings of difficulty throwing things away, storing things to avoid negative feelings, and accumulating things that interfere with activities and functionality in the house [4]. This hoarding behavior is abnormal and gives a negative impression of yourself and the people around you [5].

Individuals who experience hoarding disorder cannot carry out normal daily lives such as cooking, bathing, working, and taking care of themselves properly because of the accumulation of items which reduces their space at home. The prevalence of hoarding disorder is estimated reach 2-5% of the world's human population and the initial symptoms begin in early adolescence and become severe in later life [4]. Adolescence is the first time a person experiences this disorder because of the habit of storing items purchased or obtained. Previous findings indicated that more than 50% of cases of hoarding disorder symptoms appear between the ages of 10-20 years and get worse at the age of 40 years if they are not treated at all [3][6]. Hoarding disorder is not physically visible during adolescence because individuals are not able to collect things until adulthood. However, this can be identified through the habits of individuals who like to store things. Hence, current research intend to examine the intervention to prevent hoarding in the future by reducing the symptoms of hoarding disorder.

Therefore, decluttering techniques using minimalist play methods are offered to help minimize hoarding disorders and prevent them getting worse. Decluttering is the process of sorting items to be stored and disposed of according to the needs and use value of the item so that the room will look tidier and there will be no piles of items [7]. Apart from that, decluttering is also the process of reducing material and non-material things that disturb an individual's focus so that it is easier to consume according to needs, manage finances, create peace and happiness [8]. Research on decluttering has been carried out to increase authentic happiness through the process of sorting and donating goods. However, there has been no research in Indonesia that uses decluttering techniques to help sufferers of hoarding disorder. The novelty of this research is that it combines minimalist game methods with journaling to help hoarders let go of sentimental items and understand the use value and meaning of an item. According to Dr. Elizabeth Gilbert, journaling is the activity of putting ideas or emotions into writing which can reduce anxiety, depression, overcome trauma, and help set goals [9]. This is expected to help sufferers of hoarding disorder overcome anxiety

or negative feelings that may arise during the decluttering process. This research examines the effect of a combination of minimalist play and journaling on the decluttering process to help hoarders understand the use value of an item so they do not hoard it in the future. The hypothesis proposed in this research is the Declutter Challenge has an impact on reducing the tendency of hoarding disorder in adolescents.

Hoarding Disorder

Hoarding Disorder is a disorder that has difficulty parting with items due to emotional attraction. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (2012), groups who suffer from hoarding tend to experience other mental problems such as anxiety, indecisiveness, hyperactivity, and health problems [2]. Hoarding disorder can also be caused by experiences of trauma due to events experienced in life. Various studies reveal that family factors or stressful life events, such as serious accidents, natural disasters, sexual violence, and experiences of bullying can cause someone to experience hoarding [2][5][10].

One of the impacts of hoarding disorder is the emergence of conflict with those closest to you. Hoarders will give a negative response as a sign of dislike for people who throw away hoarders' belongings. Apart from that, hoarders will also feel negative emotions if they have difficulty finding important objects at certain moments [2].

Decluttering

Decluttering of goods is the process of selecting items to be stored and disposed of according to needs and use value. Decluttering has the benefit of making the house cleaner, neater, and reducing anxiety due to piles of items. The decluttering method was first coined by Henry David Thoreau who stated that a messy room leads to a messy and depressed life and thinking [11].

Decluttering can trigger happiness in a person's life by using the "deny, dispose, and detach" method [12]. Individuals can reduce, select, donate, and dispose of the items they own. This is very challenging when someone has to sort various types of items that are considered important continuously. Decluttering can be done using several methods, one of which is minimalist games. Individuals must select one unused item by date so that they have a target for each day to get rid of.

Journaling

Journaling is an activity of channeling thoughts, ideas, and emotions into writing or images. Individuals do journaling to relieve burdens by freeing their thoughts and feelings from the problems they are facing [13]. Even though it is not widely used, there are already several counselors who use journaling techniques in counseling. This technique can be categorized as expressive writing therapy because individuals can write down things that disturb their feelings to understand themselves. Journaling has positive impacts, such as greater self-

awareness and acceptance [13]. Erford's (2015) research also proves that journaling can help the process of self-discovery, self-growth, and self-actualization through the writing process [14].

Through journaling, individuals can write freely according to their feelings about an event without fear of being judged by others. Journaling techniques can be used to overcome depression, anxiety, or even trauma by writing down what you feel when these emotions arise. This is by research which explains that journaling can reduce depression and anxiety in individuals [15].

2. Methods

2.1 Research Approach

The research uses a quasi-experimental approach with a pretest-posttest control group design model. The independent variable in this research is Declutter Challenge and the dependent variable is hoarding disorder. The research was carried out for 5 months from June to October in Semarang City.

2.2 Participants

Determining subjects used nonrandomized pretest-posttest where the sample was divided into two groups and received a pretest and posttest. However, only the experimental group received treatment [17]. The subject criteria are teenagers 15-20 years old with a moderate to high level of hoarding disorder tendencies as measured using the saving inventory scale and the hoarding disorder assessment scale. In accordance with data that hoarding behavior can appear from the age of 10-20 years [3][6][18]

2.3 Measures

Data were collected using observation, interviews, and the saving inventory-revised scale and hoarding rating scale. Observations and interviews were carried out according to guidelines based on hoarding disorder theory. The "Saving Inventory-Revised" scale was developed by Frost et al with internal consistency $\alpha = 0.93$ and test-retest reliability $r = 0.86$ with a score range of 0-4 consisting of 3 aspects, namely clutter with 9 questions, difficult discarding with 9 questions 7 questions, and acquisition of 7 questions [19]. The "Hoarding Rating Scale" scale was adapted by Tolin et al (2008) with a reliability of 0.92 with a score range of 0-8 consisting of 5 questions in the form of clutter, difficulty discarding, excessive acquisition, and the resulting distress or impairment caused by hoarding [20]. The "Clutter Image Rating" scale was compiled by Frost et al (2008) with a reliability of 0.82, consisting of 3 series of images, namely the living room, kitchen and bedroom which will be selected according to illustrations of the condition of the subject's room in the house [21].

2.4 Intervention

Table 1. Research stages

Research Stage	Activity
Research Preparation	Compiled reports and obtained literature
Subject Selection	Looking for subjects through screening (391 respondents), 343 respondents were found who met the medium to high criteria. Continuing to provide a revised inventory saving scale and hoarding rating scale
Pretest Data Collection	Obtain pretest data on hoarding discovery levels from 114 respondents and determine a sample that meets the medium to high criteria of 31 subjects.
Treatment	Subjects received the Declutter Challenge treatment in five sessions with a total of seven meetings.
Posttest and Follow-Up Data Collection	Obtain data measuring the level of hoarding disorder after receiving treatment
Research Reporting	Obtain conclusions from data analysis to answer the problem, formulation, and compose the final report

Table 2. Declutter challenge treatment stages

Session	Activity	Time
1	Building rapport, informed consent, and exploring problems through interviews, observations, and image rating scales	180 minutes
2	Psychoeducation and discussion	120 minutes
3	The declutter challenge treatment consists of providing decluttering techniques using a combination of minimalist games and journaling methods. There are 3 meetings, namely 1) Meeting 1: Decluttering; 2) Meeting 2: Interview regarding the subject's feelings and returning; 3) Meeting 3: Collection of all decluttering items.	First meeting: 60 minutes per subject. Second meeting: 30 minutes per subject Third meeting: 15 minutes per subject
4	Termination: evaluation of the results and condition of the subject, measurement of Hoarding Disorder	120 minutes
5	Follow-up: re-evaluation	60 minutes

The quantitative data analysis technique uses a paired t-test by testing the pretest, posttest and follow-up scores for each group. This test is to find out whether there is a difference in scores between before and after the intervention. Then, an independent t-test was also measured by testing the gain score between the control and experimental groups to find out whether there was a difference in scores between the two groups. Furthermore, to find out in more depth regarding the condition of the subject's tendencies and feelings during the process, a qualitative analysis was carried out using the descriptive-narrative analysis method on the results of observations and interviews.

2.5 Analyzes

The quantitative data analysis technique uses a paired t-test by testing the pretest, posttest, and follow-up scores for each group. This test is to find out whether there is a difference in scores between before and after the intervention. Then, an independent t-test was also measured by testing the gain score between the control and experimental groups to find out whether there was a difference in scores between the two groups. Furthermore, to find out more deeply about the condition of the subject's tendencies and feelings during the process, a qualitative analysis was carried out using the content analysis method through observations and interviews.

3. Results and Discussions

Table 3. Descriptive analysis saving inventory-revised

	N	Range	Sum	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Var
Pre-Ex	15	35	618	28	63	41.20	10.712	114.743
Post-Ex	15	31	465	15	46	31.00	9.016	81.286
Foll-Ex	15	36	429	13	49	28.60	10.782	116.257
Pre-Con	15	19	618	28	47	38.63	6.054	36.650
Past-Con	15	29	578	23	52	36.13	8.269	68.380
Foll-Con	15	35	566	21	56	35.37	10.513	110.517

The results of the descriptive analysis of saving inventory-revised scale show that there are differences between the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group had a pretest score in the high range, namely 35 with a minimum score of 28 and a maximum of 63, in the medium to very high category. After being given treatment (posttest), the experimental group obtained an average score of 31 with a minimum score of 15 and a maximum of 46, in the very low to high category. Meanwhile, the control group had a

pretest score ranging from 19, a minimum score of 28 and a maximum of 47. During the posttest measurement, the control group obtained an average score of 36.13 with a minimum score of 23 and a maximum score of 52.

This shows that there was a decrease in the experimental group after being given treatment (posttest) seen from the minimum score of 28 to 15 and the maximum score of 63 to 46 with an average of 41.2 to 31. Meanwhile, the control group was still in the same range as seen from the score. the minimum value is 28 to 23 and the maximum value is 47 to 52 with an average of 38.63 to 36.13.

Table 4. The descriptive analysis of saving inventory-revised scale

	N	Range	Sum	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	Var
Pre-Ex	15	8	4	4	12	780	2.007	4.029
Post-Ex	15	7	3	3	10	640	2.414	5.829
Foll-Ex	15	7	3	3	10	613	1.767	3.124
Pre-Con	15	7	4	4	11	825	2.082	4.333
Past-Con	15	6	6	6	12	800	1.673	2.800
Foll-Con	15	7	4	4	11	788	2.363	5.583

The results of the descriptive analysis of the saving inventory-revised scale show that there are differences between the experimental group and the control group. The experimental group had a pretest score with a high range, namely 8 with a minimum score of 4 and a maximum of 12. After being given treatment (posttest), the experimental group obtained an average score of 6.4 with a minimum score of 3 and a maximum of 10. Meanwhile, the control group had The pretest score ranges from 7, the minimum score is 4 and the maximum is 12. During the posttest measurement, the control group obtained an average score of 8 with a minimum score of 6 and a maximum score of 12.

This shows that there was a decrease in the experimental group after being given treatment (posttest) seen from the minimum score of 4 to 3 and the maximum score of 12 to 10 with an average of 7.8 to 6.4. Meanwhile, the control group is still in the same range, with a minimum score of 4 to 6 and a maximum score of 11 to 12 with an average of 8.25 to 8.



Fig 1. The changes of saving inventory-revised scale scores in experimental group

Twelve experimental subjects experienced a decrease in saving inventory-revised scale scores on posttest measurements. Two subjects experienced an increase in scores between the pretest and posttest but experienced a decrease at follow-up. One subject consistently experienced an increase in scores both at posttest and follow-up.



Fig 2. The changes of saving inventory-revised scale scores in experimental group

Six control group subjects experienced a decrease in saving inventory-revised scale scores on posttest and follow-up measurements. Five subjects experienced a decrease in scores at posttest but experienced an increase in scores again at follow-up. Three subjects consistently experienced improved scores during the posttest and follow-up. Two subjects experienced an increase in scores at posttest but experienced a decrease at follow-up.

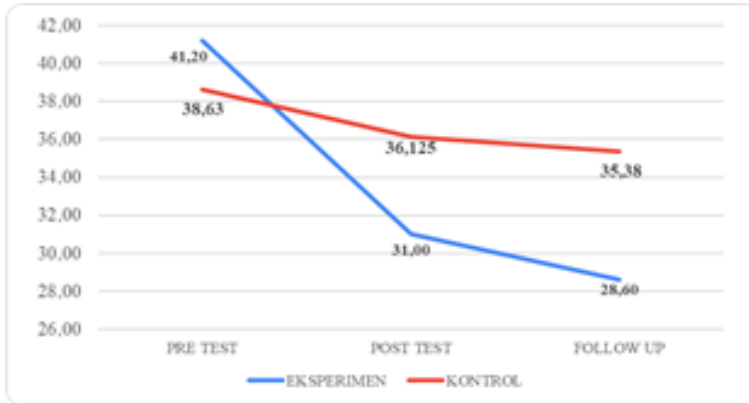


Fig 3. The changes of average score of the experimental and control groups

The figure above shows that there is a change in the average score of pre-test, post-test, and follow-up. Statistical analysis of the paired t-test and independent t-test obtained the following results.

Table 5. Paired t-test of saving inventory-revised scale (confidence interval of the difference 95%)

	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-Ex	10.200	10.065	3.925	14	.002
Post-Ex	2.400	5.329	1.744	14	.103
Foll-Ex	12.600	10.986	4.442	14	.001
Pre-Con	2.500	7.090	1.410	15	.179
Past-Con	.750	5.994	.500	15	.624
Foll-Con	3.250	9.132	1.424	15	.175

The hypothesis proposed is a one-way hypothesis. Then the significance results are divided by 2 (1-tailed). There was a significant change in the experimental group's saving inventory-revised scale score between before and after treatment. This can be seen from the mean value=10.2 and $p=0.001$ ($p<0.05$). The control group experienced insignificant changes with mean=2.5 and $p=0.089$ ($p>0.05$). These results show that giving the Declutter Challenge can reduce symptoms of hoarding disorder.

Table 6. Independent t-test of saving inventory-revised scale (confidence interval of the difference 95%)

		Levene's Test for Equity of Variances						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Meas Diff	Std error diff
Gained Score	Pre-Post	.931	.343	-2.475	29	.019	-7.700	3.111
	Post-Foll	.046	.831	-.808	29	.426	-1.650	2.042
	Pre-Foll	.179	.676	-2.584	29	.015	-9.350	3.619

There was a significant difference in the saving inventory-revised scale scores between the experimental group and the control group. Judging from the gain score, $p=0.019$ ($p<0.05$). These results show that the decline in the group that received the Declutter Challenge treatment was more significant than the group that did not receive the treatment. Two weeks after the post-test measurement, follow-up measurements were carried out. Gained score shows $p=0.426$ ($p>0.05$). This means that there is a significant difference in saving inventory-revised scale scores in the two groups that received different treatments during the intervention process.

Table 7. Paired t-test of hoarding rating scale (confidence interval of the difference 95%)

	Mean	Std Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Pre-Post Ex	1.400	3.066	1.769	14	0.099
Post-Foll Ex	0.267	1.907	0.541	14	0.597
Pre-Foll Ex	1.667	2.968	2.175	14	0.047
Pre-Post Con	0.250	2.145	0.466	15	0.648
Post-Foll Con	0.125	1.500	0.333	15	0.743
Pre-Foll Con	0.375	2.062	0.728	15	0.478

Based on the hypothesis proposed, the significance results are divided into 2 (1-tailed). There was a significant change in the experimental group's hoarding rating scale score between before and after treatment. Judging from the mean value=1.4 and $p=0.049$ ($p<0.05$). The control group showed no significant changes with mean=0.25 and $p=0.324$ ($p>0.05$). This means that the Declutter Challenge intervention can be carried out to reduce the tendency of hoarding disorder.

Two weeks later, follow-up measurements were carried out. The experimental group had a mean value = 0.267 and $p = 0.298$ ($p > 0.05$). In the control group, the mean value = 0.125 and $p = 0.371$ ($p > 0.05$). These results indicate that the Declutter Challenge can reduce the tendency of hoarding disorder during the intervention process.

Table 8. Independent t-test of hoarding rating scale (confidence interval of the difference 95%)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig (2- tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif
Gained Score	Pre-Post	1.949	.173	-1.217	29	.234	1.150	.945
	Post-Foll	3.668	.065	-.231	29	.819	-.142	.614
	Pre-Foll	.013	.909	5.889	29	.000	6.458	1.093

There were less significant differences in the hoarding rating scale scores between groups. Judging from the gain score, $p=0.234$ ($p>0.05$). Follow-up measurements were given two weeks after the end of treatment. The gain score value shows $p=0.819$ ($p>0.05$). This means that there is a significant difference in hoarding rating scale scores in the two groups that received different treatments during the intervention process.

Research data was also analyzed qualitatively. The results of observations and interviews found variations in hoarding disorder tendencies based on three aspects of the saving inventory-revised scale. Seven subjects had rooms full of items and not neatly arranged. Five subjects had messy piles of clothes. Then, five other subjects also kept various kinds of books and papers in their room. Apart from that, there were several other collections of items, such as used food wrappers and damaged electronics, which were stored in the subject's room.

Sorting and getting rid of things is not easy to do for certain reasons. Nine subjects found it difficult to get rid of items because they had memories (sentimental). Six subjects assumed the item would be used again. Three subjects found it difficult to let go of unused items because they had to try to get the items.

The accumulation of items owned subconsciously influences the desire to acquire and keep more items (compulsiveness). Seven subjects had the urge to buy goods because they were

cute, discounted, popular, easy to get, or recommended by friends. Five subjects wanted to keep items given to them by other people.

After participating in the Declutter Challenge program, eight subjects said they felt relieved and happy. In addition, three subjects found it easier to sort or get rid of unused items. Four subjects admitted that the items felt reduced so that the room became more spacious. Then, one subject said that the feeling of wanting to keep things decreased. Meanwhile, other subjects felt a little sad, didn't have the heart, and lost things after decluttering.

Hoarding disorder is a disorder characterized by difficulty getting rid of objects and having an emotional attachment so that you feel negative emotions when you have to part with the item. This disorder does not yet have standardized treatment. However, there have been many studies that have tried to use psychotherapy, such as CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy), CFT (compassion-focused therapy), and cognitive rehabilitation to overcome hoarding disorder. The CBT model designed by Frost and Stakette, which consists of 26 sessions with 5 important components, has been proven to be effective in reducing symptoms of hoarding disorder [40][41]. Cognitive behavioral therapy carried out in groups has also been proven to be used to reduce symptoms of hoarding disorder [23][24][34]. Cognitive rehabilitation designed for hoarding sufferers with traumatic brain injury has a positive influence on reducing symptoms of hoarding disorder [22].

Assessment and use of psychotherapy to treat symptoms of hoarding disorder is often carried out in adult sufferers. It is rare to find hoarding disorder assessments for young sufferers. The meta-analysis of Guzick et al (2020) states that the treatment of hoarding disorder still focuses on adult sufferers, so further research is needed for young sufferers [28]. Data shows that more than 50% of cases of hoarding disorder symptoms appear at the age of 10-20 years and get worse at the age of 40 years if they are not treated at all [3][6]. Symptoms of hoarding disorder are not physically visible during adolescence because individuals are not able to collect things until adulthood. The use of CBT treatment for young hoarding sufferers is not widely used because parents of children suffering from hoarding disorder think they can educate their children and think that they still have limits when it comes to storing things [30].

Limited research suggests that decluttering can be used as an alternative to treat hoarding disorder. This research aims to test the combination of decluttering minimalist game and journaling methods to reduce the tendency of hoarding disorder in adolescents. In line with hypothesis, there was a significant effect of pretest-posttest-follow up on the total saving inventory-revised scale score of the group that received the declutter challenge treatment. These findings complement research which states that in-home decluttering is effective and can be an alternative for reducing symptoms of hoarding disorder [33]. Pilot study which conducted by Hicks (2020) show that decluttering techniques using minimalist games

provide greater changes in self-confidence, productivity and happiness than meditation methods [29].

Minimalist gaming is a decluttering method that is done slowly by getting rid of 2-3 items every day. Applying the declutter challenge method helps subjects reduce feelings of difficulty parting with items and increases awareness of the use value of items. Research with similar stages shows that getting rid of things slowly can reduce feelings of difficulty throwing away and teach sufferers to get rid of things, resulting in a reduction in symptoms of hoarding disorder [22]. Decluttering can invite the subject to think about and reconsider the items that need to be kept and put away. This is one of the stages of CBT augmentation which has been proven to reduce the symptoms of hoarding disorder [31][40]. Items resulting from decluttering will be separated into unusable items to be thrown away and usable items to be donated. The subject's separation of items can foster a sense of caring for others and happiness through the sharing process. In line with research by Zulicha et al (2021), it also shows that decluttering can increase satisfaction, happiness and optimism in consumer subjects [7].

Journaling is the activity of pouring ideas or emotions into writing which can reduce anxiety, depression, overcome trauma, and help set goals. The journaling method which is classified as an expressive writing technique in this study helps subjects to get rid of things with a feeling of relief and easily get rid of things because they can express negative emotions. This method was also found to reduce stress levels in clients at the Baddoka BNN Rehabilitation Center and can bring positive changes to self-efficacy [25][26]. In accordance with research by Jannah (2022) expressive writing techniques are proven to make you calmer and not feel excessive worry and fear [32]. Expressive writing methods with recognition or initial writing sessions, examination or writing exercises, juxtaposition or feedback, and application to the self were also found to reduce anxiety in PLWHA [39]. Other research shows that expressive writing therapy can reduce stress in teenagers and students working on their thesis as well as mild depression in students and the elderly [35][36][37][38].

4. Conclusions

Based on the results, it can be concluded that the Declutter Challenge can enhance several positive changes in subjects related to the reduction of hoarding disorder tendencies level both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative analysis indicate there was a significant decrease in hoarding tendencies between before and after the Declutter Challenge which can be seen from the results of the pretest, posttest, and follow-up measurements.

Apart from that, the Declutter Challenge can help to sort out used and unused items. There is a feeling of relief and joy when you can get rid of items that have not been used for a long time and can give these items to people who need them. Decluttering and journaling also increased the subject's awareness of the use value of an item so that they dared to give items that are still useful so that they can be reused by those who need them. The journaling technique applied can also be a medium for conveying feelings related to items as a form of memento so that it will be easier to let go of the item.

Authors Contributions

RNG conceived the original idea. All authors discussed and designed the study. RNG, NM, and SK performed the experiments and analyzed data. EAS supervised the project. RNG and NM wrote the manuscript in consultation with EAS.

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