

Psychoeducation to Increase Self-Harm Literacy in Magetan Middle School Students

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Abstract

In November 2023, the Magetan District Health Service reported 870 cases of self-harm among middle school students in Magetan. These acts of self-harm involved teenagers cutting their hands with sharp objects. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of psychoeducation in improving self-harm literacy among middle school students. The research employed a pre-experimental design using a one-group pre-test and post-test approach. A total of 50 junior high school students in Magetan, aged 12–14 years, participated in the study and were randomly assigned to the experimental group. Data collection was conducted using a multiple-choice self-harm literacy test. The analysis utilized a paired t-test (dependent t-test) to determine the significance of the intervention's effects, with the criterion for significance set at a p-value of < 0.05 . The results indicated a p-value of < 0.05 , demonstrating that the intervention had a significant effect. It was concluded that psychoeducation effectively improved self-harm literacy in the experimental group. Furthermore, the R-square value exceeded 0.5 (53%), indicating a strong influence of psychoeducation on enhancing self-harm literacy. These findings affirm that psychoeducational interventions play a substantial role in increasing students' awareness and understanding of the dangers of self-harm.

Keywords: literacy, psychoeducation, self-harm, students, self-compassion

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Introduction

Adolescence is a dynamic phase of life marked by significant emotional changes and high-stress levels. Adolescents tend to experience emotional instability, easily feel anxious and are prone to conflicts in daily life (Dianovinina, 2018). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescents as individuals aged between 10 and 19 years. At this stage, their primary developmental task is to achieve emotional independence, allowing them to manage their feelings and stress more constructively (Lubis & Yudhaningrum, 2020). Globally, WHO data indicate that approximately one in seven adolescents in this age range experience mental health disorders, with depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders including self-harm, being among the leading causes of adolescent mortality, particularly in those aged 15 to 19 years.

Self-harm typically emerges in early adolescence and continues into young adulthood (Nock, 2010). Adolescents often engage in self-harm as a mechanism to release emotions they struggle to regulate (Elvira & Sakti, 2021). Walsh (2005) defines self-harm as intentional self-inflicted injury aimed at relieving psychological distress, even though it rarely leads to death. This behavior also contradicts prevailing social norms. Hungerford et al. (2016) identified various forms of self-harm, including cutting the skin with sharp objects, scratching the body, hitting oneself, banging one's head, burning parts of the body, pulling out hair, and substance abuse such as alcohol and illicit drug use.

A report from the Magetan District Health Office in November 2023 recorded 870 cases of self-harm among middle school students. These adolescents typically engaged in self-harm by cutting their hands with sharp objects. The primary triggers for this behavior are believed to include past traumatic experiences, a lack of understanding regarding the risks of self-harm, and the influence of social media trends. Self-harm has complex consequences for those who engage in it. According to Higgins (2015), the short-term effects include temporary relief; however, this is often followed by feelings of shame, guilt, stress, social isolation, low self-esteem, and an increased risk of infection from open wounds. In the long term, self-harm can lead to tissue damage, nerve and tendon injuries, and even impairment of vital organ function due to substance abuse.

Several factors contribute to self-harming behavior, including mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and genetic predispositions. Additionally, a lack of a supportive environment, ineffective coping skills, and intense emotional distress such as anger, sadness, hopelessness, and feelings of isolation also contribute to self-harm (Higgins, 2015). Goncalves et al. (2023) found that a history of psychopathology and low self-compassion are primary predictors of self-harm. Individuals with low self-compassion tend to struggle in accepting negative experiences and are more likely to use self-harm as a coping mechanism. Conversely, individuals with high self-compassion are better able to navigate challenges more healthily and develop a more accurate understanding of their negative experiences (Jiang et al., 2017).

Neff and McGehee (2010) assert that self-compassion can be an effective intervention for individuals with a negative self-view, helping them develop a healthier relationship with themselves and improving their psychological well-being. Neff (2009) further explains that high levels of self-compassion are associated with increased happiness and optimism, as well as reduced anxiety, depression, and fear of failure. Therefore, self-compassion can function as a protective factor in mitigating tendencies toward self-harm. Given the rising number of

self-harm cases among adolescents, a comprehensive psychological approach is necessary to raise awareness of the harmful consequences of this behavior. One viable strategy is psychoeducation. Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the impact of psychoeducation in improving adolescent literacy on self-harm and to evaluate its effectiveness in reducing self-harming tendencies.

Method

This study employed a quantitative pre-experimental design using a pre-test and post-test approach with a single group. The study population comprised middle school students from a selected school in Magetan. The sample consisted of 50 students who were selected using purposive sampling based on the following inclusion criteria:

1. Adolescents aged 12–14 years,
2. Enrolled as students at Middle School X in Magetan, and
3. Willing to participate as respondents.

The research procedure included the following steps:

1. Selection of respondents based on inclusion and exclusion criteria,
2. Provision of information about the study objectives and procedures to prospective respondents,
3. Completion of informed consent forms and the pre-test by willing participants,
4. Implementation of the psychoeducational intervention in a single session through seminar posters, and
5. Data analysis using a t-test.

The instrument used in this study was the Indonesian version of the Self-Compassion Scale, developed by Muttaqin and colleagues (2020), consisting of 26 items. Jiang, You, Zheng, and Lin (2017) discovered that self-compassion serves as a protective factor against self-harm behavior. Therefore, this study aimed to assess the impact of psychoeducation on increasing self-compassion and reducing self-harm tendencies among adolescents.

Result and Discussion

The prerequisite test in this study included a normality test. The normality test results for self-compassion showed a significance value of 0.200. The applied criterion was $p > 0.05$. Based on this criterion, the self-compassion data were normally distributed, indicating no significant difference between the research sample and the population. The results of the normality test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Normality Test Results				
	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Caption
	Statistic	df	Sig.	
<i>Self-compassion</i>	0.106	50	0.200	Normal

Next, a hypothesis test was conducted to assess the effectiveness of self-compassion psychoeducation in reducing self-harming behavior among adolescents. The analysis results indicated a significant difference in self-compassion levels before and after the psychoeducational intervention. The paired sample t-test yielded a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), with an R-square value of 53%. This finding suggests that a significant change

occurred between pre-test and post-test results, demonstrating that psychoeducation delivered through seminars and posters has a positive impact on adolescent mental health.

Table 2: Self-Harm Test Results

	N	Mean	St.dev	t	df	p value (Asymp. Sig. [2-tailed])
Pretest	50	79.92	8.083	- 7.398	49	0.000
Posttest	50	90.38	9.187			
Rsquare	$t^2 : (t^2 + df)$		0,5276		53%	

These findings align with Xavier et al. (2016), who stated that adolescents with negative self-perceptions, a desire for self-harm, and an inability to regulate their emotions in stressful situations tend to struggle with low self-compassion. Excessive self-criticism, fear, and avoidance of self-kindness should be addressed through self-compassion-focused interventions. Self-compassion helps adolescents develop a sense of security, self-love, and emotional regulation, particularly in managing negative thoughts such as excessive self-criticism. Neff (2003) suggested that self-compassion levels in adolescence tend to be lower compared to other life stages. Germer (2009) also stated that self-compassion is associated with life satisfaction, better emotional regulation, lower depression levels, and reduced anxiety. Adolescents who possess self-compassion engage more effectively with challenges and stress (Neff, 2003). For instance, when adolescents experience failure or face difficulties, those with higher self-compassion tend to treat themselves with kindness, care, and understanding rather than engaging in self-blame.

Negative thought patterns and responses toward distressing conditions often trigger self-harm behaviors. Self-compassion encourages individuals to reinterpret challenges with a more positive perspective. Aulia and Rahayu (2022) found that self-compassion promotes positive thinking and adaptive responses, even when facing adverse circumstances. Individuals with high self-compassion maintain self-love despite challenges and do not resort to self-blame. Instead, they accept difficult situations and believe in their ability to resolve them constructively. Further supporting this, Sumargi et al. (2022) found that self-compassion negatively correlates with self-harm tendencies. Self-compassion-focused psychoeducation interventions have been shown to reduce self-criticism, help individuals identify negative thoughts and emotions, and play a crucial role in preventing and managing self-harm tendencies. Khairunnisa et al. (2022) emphasized that the three core components of self-compassion self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness are critical factors in helping adolescents who tend to self-harm.

Psychoeducation plays a vital role in preventing, recognizing, and managing mental health issues. Maya (2021) emphasized that knowledge of mental health symptoms and disorders helps individuals identify early warning signs and take appropriate preventive measures. This aligns with the findings of Jafar and NR (2023), which demonstrated that mental health literacy significantly improved among seminar participants after receiving psychoeducation on self-harm. Increased literacy helps individuals detect early mental health issues, seek professional help, and reduce social stigma associated with mental health struggles.

This conclusion is further supported by research conducted by Ligid and Cuartero (2022), which found that mental health education significantly reduces the stigma surrounding professional help seeking behavior. As students' understanding of mental health increases,

they become more likely to seek appropriate assistance when experiencing psychological distress. Therefore, self-compassion-focused psychoeducation, delivered through interactive discussions, seminars, and visual materials, can be an effective intervention strategy for enhancing adolescent emotional well-being and preventing self-harm behaviors.

Conclusion

This study demonstrated that psychoeducation focusing on self-compassion effectively improves self-harm literacy among adolescents. Hypothesis testing results indicated that this intervention significantly contributed to reducing self-harming tendencies. Self-compassion plays a crucial role in helping adolescents develop a sense of security, self-love, and the ability to manage emotions and negative thoughts, including excessive self-criticism. These findings align with previous studies, which show that higher levels of self-compassion correlate with a lower likelihood of engaging in self-harm. Therefore, psychoeducational interventions on self-compassion can serve as an effective strategy to enhance adolescents' emotional well-being and prevent self-harming behaviors.

Recommendations

Future studies should consider using different methodologies and increasing the number of intervention sessions to assess whether psychoeducation through socialization and posters has a substantial and relevant impact on reducing self-harm intensity among adolescents. Additionally, an initial assessment should be conducted to determine whether self-harm is caused by underlying mental health disorders or external influences (such as social media, peer pressure, etc.) to optimize the psychoeducational process.

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