

The Role of Emotion Regulation Based Psychological Assistance in Improving Emotional Intelligence among Ninth Grade Junior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage characterized by emotional instability and limited impulse control. Insufficient emotion regulation skills among junior high school students often lead to impulsive behavior, social conflict, and learning difficulties. This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of an emotion regulation-based psychological assistance program in improving emotional intelligence among ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Tanjung Lago. This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach with an intervention design conducted through psychoeducation, emotion regulation training, and reflective emotional intelligence worksheets. Data were collected using pre-post worksheets, semi-structured interviews, and behavioral observations involving 20 students, with in-depth interviews conducted on six representative participants. The findings indicate improvements across five dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and social skills. Students demonstrated enhanced ability to identify emotional triggers, manage impulsive reactions, apply adaptive coping strategies, and maintain more positive social interactions. These results suggest that structured emotion regulation interventions are effective in supporting emotional development and promoting adaptive behavior among early adolescents.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence plays a crucial role in adolescents' academic success, psychological well-being, and social adjustment. During early adolescence, students frequently experience emotional instability due to developmental changes, academic pressure, and peer interactions. In school settings, poor emotional regulation often manifests as impulsive behavior, withdrawal, difficulty concentrating, and interpersonal conflicts, which can negatively affect learning outcomes and classroom climate.

Previous studies have emphasized that emotional regulation is a core component of emotional intelligence, particularly in the dimensions of self-awareness and self-regulation as proposed by Goleman. Students who are unable to recognize emotional triggers and manage emotional responses tend to react impulsively, avoid responsibility, or engage in maladaptive coping strategies such as emotional suppression or escapism. In junior high school contexts, these challenges are commonly observed when students face academic demands, disciplinary actions, or social rejection.

Several emotional intelligence interventions have been implemented in educational settings, including counseling programs, socio-emotional learning modules, and classroom-based training. However, many interventions rely on short-term lectures or teacher-centered approaches, which limit students' opportunities for personal reflection and daily emotional practice. Research indicates that reflective activities, such as emotional journaling and structured worksheets, can enhance students' awareness of emotional patterns and promote adaptive regulation strategies through consistent self-monitoring.

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This study proposes a psychological assistance model based on emotional regulation using a weekly emotional intelligence worksheet combined with psychoeducational sessions. The intervention emphasizes daily emotional reflection, identification of emotional triggers, application of adaptive coping strategies, and commitment to positive behavioral change. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on quantitative measurement, this research adopts a qualitative approach to explore students' emotional experiences in depth, particularly changes in emotional awareness, regulation strategies, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

The novelty of this research lies in the integration of structured emotional regulation worksheets within a school-based psychological assistance program conducted through community service (KKN). The study provides empirical insights into how continuous emotional reflection and simple regulation techniques can foster emotional intelligence development among junior high school students. The findings are expected to contribute to educational psychology literature and offer practical implications for school-based emotional intervention programs.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with an intervention approach. The program was conducted as part of a community-based psychological assistance initiative.

Participants consisted of six ninth-grade students at SMP Negeri 2 Tanjung Lago (three male and three female). The participants were selected for in-depth interviews based on their pre-intervention emotional response patterns, which included high impulsivity, moderate emotional regulation, and low emotional responsiveness.

The intervention was implemented over one week through multiple sessions lasting approximately 30 minutes each. The activities included:

1. Psychoeducational sessions on emotional awareness and emotion regulation
2. Training in adaptive regulation strategies such as deep breathing, cognitive reframing, physical activity, and spiritual reflection
3. Daily emotional intelligence worksheets focusing on emotional identification, triggers, coping strategies, and personal commitments

Data were collected through pre-post emotional intelligence worksheets, semi-structured interviews, and behavioral observations. The data were analyzed thematically to identify changes in emotional awareness, regulation strategies, motivation, empathy, and social interaction.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

The findings indicate significant changes in students' emotional intelligence following the emotional regulation intervention. Prior to the program, most students were only able to identify emotions in general terms such as anger or sadness and showed limited awareness of the specific situations that triggered these emotional states. After participating in the intervention, students demonstrated improved emotional awareness by identifying emotions more precisely and linking them to concrete causes, including academic pressure, conflicts with peers, or interactions with teachers. This improvement reflects an increase in self-awareness, which serves as the foundational component of emotional intelligence.

In terms of emotional regulation, students initially exhibited impulsive and maladaptive responses, such as withdrawing from situations, avoiding confrontation, or expressing emotions without control. Post-intervention data revealed a noticeable shift toward more adaptive regulation strategies. Students began to pause before reacting, apply deep breathing techniques, engage in physical activities, and utilize spiritual coping practices such as prayer or reflection to manage emotional tension. These changes suggest that students were able to internalize and apply regulation strategies introduced during the intervention in real-life school situations.

The intervention also contributed to enhanced self-motivation among students. As emotional regulation skills improved, students reported greater ability to remain focused on academic tasks despite experiencing emotional challenges. The capacity to manage emotions effectively reduced emotional distractions and fostered a sense of control over personal behavior. Consequently, students experienced increased internal motivation and satisfaction when they succeeded in regulating their emotions and completing learning activities.

Furthermore, positive developments were observed in students' empathy and social skills. Following the intervention, students became more attentive to their peers' emotional states and more considerate in their social interactions. They demonstrated increased cooperation, improved communication, and reduced interpersonal conflict within the classroom. These findings indicate that strengthening emotional awareness and regulation not only benefits individual emotional functioning but also contributes to healthier social relationships and a more supportive learning environment.

3.2. Discussions

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The findings indicate that emotion regulation–based psychological assistance effectively enhances emotional intelligence among junior high school students. Improvements across all five emotional intelligence dimensions align with Goleman’s theoretical framework, emphasizing the foundational role of self-awareness and self-regulation in emotional development.

The use of reflective worksheets facilitated cognitive processing of emotional experiences, enabling students to internalize regulation strategies. This reflective approach supports previous research suggesting that structured emotional reflection promotes adaptive coping and behavioral change during adolescence.

Furthermore, integrating physical and spiritual coping strategies proved beneficial in addressing diverse emotional needs, highlighting the importance of culturally relevant and context-sensitive interventions.

5. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that an emotion regulation–based psychological assistance program can effectively improve emotional intelligence among ninth-grade junior high school students. The intervention enhanced students’ emotional awareness, regulation skills, motivation, empathy, and social competence. These findings support the implementation of structured emotional regulation programs as preventive mental health interventions within school settings. Future research is encouraged to apply mixed-method approaches and longer intervention periods to examine long-term outcomes.

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