

The Effectiveness of Emotion Regulation Training to Increase Happiness in Adolescents in Orphanages

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Abstrack

Based on the model of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998), the ability to manage emotional responses is very important for achieving subjective well-being and happiness. Adolescents in orphanages are vulnerable to experiencing emotional distress and low levels of happiness due to limited affective support. This study aims to test the effectiveness of emotion regulation training in increasing happiness in 16 adolescents (ages 10–17 years). It was hypothesized that training based on Gross's five stages of emotion regulation would significantly improve happiness scores. Using the one group pretest-posttest design and the Hills & Argyle Happiness Scale, the training was conducted in three sessions (one day). The results of the Paired Sample t-Test showed that although the average happiness score increased marginally from 91.63 (Pretest) to 92.63 (Posttest), the increase was not statistically significant ($p = 0.328 > 0.05$). These findings provide a theoretical and practical contribution to the need for longer and more intensive intervention durations as input for the design of sustainable programs to improve subjective welfare in orphanages.

Keywords: emotion regulation, happiness, orphanage adolescents, subjective well-being, emotion regulation strategies

Abstrak

Berdasarkan model regulasi emosi (Gross, 1998), kemampuan mengelola respons emosional sangat penting untuk mencapai kesejahteraan dan kebahagiaan subjektif. Remaja di panti asuhan rentan mengalami tekanan emosional dan tingkat kebahagiaan yang rendah karena dukungan afektif yang terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji efektivitas pelatihan regulasi emosi dalam meningkatkan kebahagiaan pada 16 remaja (usia 10-17 tahun). Dihipotesiskan bahwa pelatihan berdasarkan lima tahap regulasi emosi Gross akan secara signifikan meningkatkan skor kebahagiaan. Menggunakan desain pretest-posttest satu kelompok dan Skala Kebahagiaan Hills & Argyle, pelatihan dilakukan dalam tiga sesi (satu hari). Hasil Paired Sample T-Test menunjukkan bahwa meskipun rata-rata skor kebahagiaan meningkat sedikit dari 91,63 (Pretest) menjadi 92,63 (Posttest), peningkatan tersebut tidak signifikan secara statistik ($p = 0,328 > 0,05$). Temuan ini memberikan kontribusi teoritis dan praktis terhadap kebutuhan durasi intervensi yang lebih lama dan lebih intensif sebagai masukan untuk desain program berkelanjutan untuk meningkatkan kesejahteraan subjektif di panti asuhan.

Kata kunci: regulasi emosi, kebahagiaan, remaja panti asuhan, kesejahteraan subjektif, strategi regulasi emosi

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INTRODUCTION

Orphanages are social institutions that offer protection, nurturing, and education for children who have lost their parents or who come from underprivileged families (KBBI, 2012). Orphanages are not only a place of residence and protection for children who have lost their parents, but also as an alternative to parenting and educational facilities from elementary to tertiary level (Kompas.id).

Many things are experienced by teenagers in the orphanage, including limitations in meeting emotional needs, especially affection, affection, emotional isolation due to lack of attention from caregivers, inadequate facilities, and discipline that is too strict. This results in these children becoming quiet, passive, and defensive in getting along (Prabadewi, 2014).

Based on the results of the 2022 Indonesia National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (I-NAMHS), around 15.5 million adolescents, or 34.9% of the total adolescent population in Indonesia, have mental health disorders. Meanwhile, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports that one in seven children aged 10-19 in the world face similar mental health issues that impact their emotional and social well-being (Kemkes.go.id).

In Indonesia, adolescents living in orphanages face a higher risk of having difficulty regulating emotions and having low levels of happiness. Limited affective support from caregivers, lack of facilities, and strict rules often make them feel depressed and unhappy (Prabadewi, 2014). The Taman Suka Cita Anak Bangsa Medan Orphanage also experienced the same thing, the results of the initial interview at the Taman Suka Cita Anak Bangsa Medan Orphanage showed that some teenagers living there, they faced various challenges, especially the lack of facilities (inadequate study space, lack of beds, limited play space, narrow and minimal need for school), passive and difficult to express emotions openly where these conditions affect happiness.

Happiness is a state of positive emotions that encourages a person to engage in a variety of good activities. Seligman (Ariska et al., 2020) suggests that positive feelings individuals experience and the activities they engage in are related, for example, when someone is involved in things they like. Rusydi (Condinata, 2019) notes that although happiness is difficult to explain rationally, it can be felt clearly in a person's daily experiences, such as calm and peace.

According to a psychological perspective, the development of emotion regulation skills is an important aspect in the formation of subjective well-being and mental health where emotion regulation can reduce negative emotions and produce positive responses. Sulastri (Widiastuti & Widyastuti, 2023) notes that, in the regulation of emotions, there are two important parts: calming and focusing. If individuals can overcome these two factors, they can reduce mental health problems and stress, thereby increasing subjective well-being. Seligman (Condinata, 2019) suggests that individuals who are able to manage negative emotions effectively will adapt more easily to difficult situations and achieve happiness. Therefore, it takes effort to regulate emotions, known as emotion regulation. This is done to help a person act appropriately and prevent future problems that could be dangerous (Mirza & Sulistyarningsih, 2013).

Gross (Lutfianawati et al., 2023) emotion regulation is an individual's ability to cope with, manage, and express their emotions. In addition, it includes monitoring, assessing, and modifying emotional reactions to achieve desired goals. Thompson (Aesijah et al., 2016) and Gross (Mirza et al., 2022) both emphasize that the ability to



manage emotions is essential for individuals to deal with stress in their lives, as well as to understand, form, feel, manage, and express the emotions they feel.

Teaching emotion regulation can be done through a systematic training program. Mirza et al. (2021) stated that this training can help individuals feel happier. However, most studies were conducted in a school setting rather than an orphanage, used a randomized controlled trial rather than a pre-experimental design, and involved more general adolescents than foster children. In addition, the long duration of interventions in previous studies is often difficult to implement in foster care institutions that have limited time and resources. This shows that there is still a research gap regarding the effectiveness of short-duration emotion regulation training for adolescents in orphanages in Indonesia. Previous research conducted by Aesijah et al (2016) showed that emotion regulation training had a significant impact on the happiness of adolescents at the Darul Hadlonah YPM NU Kendal Orphanage, using an experimental method called the Randomized Control Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The results of the Mann-Whitney U Test on the pretest indicated a difference in happiness between the control and experimental groups before and after emotion regulation training. The experimental group showed an increase in happiness tendencies from pretest to posttest and also at follow-up, while the control group showed no improvement from pretest to posttest or follow-up.

Baer (Dika & Widyana, 2024), in addition to emotion regulation training, there are several trainings that can increase happiness, including (1) Mindfulness Training, which involves changing the response to stress. According to Kirana (Dika & Widyana, 2024), Emmons and McCullough (Sulistyarini, 2020), and Kang (Djira et al., 2024), when individuals understand the condition by increasing their own resources and avoiding automatic assessments, this can help them enjoy the process and control negative emotions. (2) Gratitude Training is a training that trains individuals to focus on the social things that happen in their lives. (3) Training on Life Satisfaction, they can usually adjust well and feel happiness in their lives. On the other hand, this is not the case if life satisfaction is low.

There are 2 hypotheses in this study, namely: (1) Ho: "there is no difference in happiness experienced by adolescents, before and after emotion regulation training", (2) Ha: "there is a difference in happiness experienced by adolescents, before and after emotion regulation training". This research is expected to provide benefits from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Theoretically, this research contributes to the field of psychology by advancing understanding of emotion regulation training and its impact on adolescent happiness. The results of the study can serve as a reference for developing theories on psychological interventions, especially in the context of emotion regulation training. Meanwhile, in terms of practical benefits, emotion regulation training has significant implications for institutions that work with adolescents, such as orphanages. Increase adolescents' happiness in orphanages through the emotion regulation techniques taught.

METHOD

This study uses an experimental research method because it involves manipulating one or more measured variables to assess the influence and impact of the manipulation on the group studied (Saifuddin, 2019). Given the limited number of subjects studied, it is more appropriate to use the Pre-Experimental One Group Pretest-Posttest design. Prasetyo and Jannah (2005) explained that this design began with the initial measurement



of the pretest, followed by the administration of the stimulus, then the measurement of dependent variables after the posttest intervention, without involving the control group.

This study involved adolescents aged 10-17 years who lived at the Taman Suka Cita Anak Bangsa Orphanage in Medan, with a total of 20 participants. With the small number of popular items, all of them are used as research samples, or the total sampling approach is used. According to Bungin (Saifuddin, 2019), total sampling is a technique in which all members of the population who meet the criteria are made research subjects, usually applied when the population is relatively small and specific.

Data collection is carried out using the Likert scale method to assess the subject's views on a topic. Subjects were asked to state how much they agreed or disagreed, with the choice of strongly agree, agree, don't know (neutral), disagree, or strongly disagree. The questions ask about statements that have both positive and negative aspects. In this study, the scale used was the happiness scale, which was designed based on the theory of Hills and Argyle (Condinata et al., 2019). Below is a framework for the happiness scale.

Table 1.
 Blueprint Happiness Scale

No	Components of Happiness	Number aitem		Sum aitem
		Favorable	Unfavorable	
1.	Life Is Rewarding	1, 11, 7	2, 12, 22	6
2.	Mentally Alert	3, 13, 8	46, 4, 14	6
3.	Pleased With Self	5, 15, 35	6, 16, 45	6
4.	Find Beauty In Things	21, 27, 41	39, 45, 28	6
5.	Satisfied With Life	38, 44, 9	24, 30, 35	6
6.	Can Organize Time	23, 29, 10	37, 40, 32	6
7.	Look Attractive	36, 42, 17	34, 26, 20	6
8.	Happy Memories	25, 31, 18	33, 43, 19	6
	Total	24	24	48

Testing of the validity and reliability of scale items was carried out using the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) program, version 26. An item is considered valid if it has an item value equal to or greater than 0.30. Meanwhile, for reliability testing using Alpha Cronbach with a level of 0.807. This number indicates that the measuring instrument has a good level of internal consistency. When the coefficient is close to 1.00, the instrument is highly reliable. Before performing data analysis, it is important to test assumptions. This test includes a normality test and a homogeneity test. The purpose of this test is to determine whether the data has a normal distribution and to evaluate the degree of uniformity in the sample of data being studied. The result obtained is considered significant if the significance value is less than 0,05. In this case, the data will be considered non-uniform if these criteria are met. To test this hypothesis, data analysis will be carried out using the Paired Samples t-test in SPSS. This analysis was used on two related samples to determine the effectiveness of training, characterized by differences between pre- and post-training measurements (Field, 2009).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The study was carried out on Wednesday, June 11, 2025 on 16 adolescents at the Taman Suka Cita Anak Bangsa orphanage. There were supposed to be 20 teenagers



participating in this study, but 4 were prevented from attending the training because there were still activities at their school. The process started from session 1 (introduction), namely, an introduction between the teams, followed by an explanation related to the activity material, giving a pretest of the happiness scale, and ending with an ice-breaking "Guess Emotions from Expressions" to melt the atmosphere. All of these activities are completed before receiving Emotion Regulation training. In this session 1, it is useful to prepare the participants emotionally and cognitively, and to assess their initial happiness levels before they receive Emotion Regulation training. The following are the details of the happiness scale that the trainees will work on.

Table 2.

Details of the Authentic and Fallen Happiness Scale Details

No	Components of Happiness	Number aitem		Sum aitem
		Favorable	Unfavorable	
1.	Life Is Rewarding	4, 8	1, 21	4
2.	Mentally Alert	3, 17	14	3
3.	Pleased With Self	-	25, 6, 22	3
4.	Find Beauty In Things	28	18	2
5.	Satisfied With Life	16	9, 31	3
6.	Can Organize Time	2, 7, 30	10, 18, 26	6
7.	Look Attractive	12	11, 15, 19	4
8.	Happy Memories	20, 23, 27	5, 13, 29	6
Total		13	18	31

Followed by session 2 (content), participants were taught to identify situations, understand happiness, prioritize their selection of situations, and were introduced to the emotional reactions they felt and the things that made them unhappy. After that, it was followed by the delivery of emotion regulation training, including what steps participants can implement, teaching emotion regulation techniques, namely the Butterfly Hug, as well as discussions about cases that can occur and how to handle them. The activity in this second session was carried out by a psychologist, namely Mrs. Husna Astria Aritonang M.Psi., Psychologist. All training participants observed the material as prepared by the research team. Furthermore, participants were given 25 minutes to discuss things they did not understand or feel and also discussed the example case given, namely how they control their emotions and what they should do if they were in that position.

As a conclusion (session 3), the activities were taken over by the research team by providing conclusions from all the activities that had been carried out. The research team immediately provided a posttest on the same day as the training. The posttest scale should have been given on another day, but given time constraints and the density of activities for teenagers living in orphanages, the posttest scale was given on the same day. All participants are still active students who have the obligation to participate in learning activities at school and outside of school. Besides that, flexible time coordination is quite difficult, given the orphanage's prearranged schedule of activities, which makes it difficult for the research team to schedule the posttest on different days. Therefore, to avoid disrupting participants' learning routines and to ensure the smooth running of the research, the posttest was administered on the same day as the training activity. Before giving the posttest, the research team conducted Ice Breaking "Guess Positive and Negative Emotions", in addition to melting the atmosphere, this activity is also useful to



help participants remember the material that has been delivered previously. Participants who can answer guesses will get prizes. At the end of the meeting, all participants were still given as a form of appreciation and gratitude for their participation in the activity.

To test the hypothesis in this study, the variables will be analyzed using the paired t-test. Before conducting an analysis to test the hypothesis, a normality test must be performed. Based on the results of the normality tests using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, it can be concluded that the pre-test and post-test data from the emotion regulation training follow a normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed a significance value (Sig) of 0.121 for pretest and 0.200 for the post test, and both of these values are greater than 0.05. In addition, the Shapiro-Wilk test showed that the significance value (Sig) for the pre test was 0.409, while for post test is 0.928, which is also greater than 0.05. It confirms that the distribution of pretest and posttest data is normal.

Based on these results, the pre- and post-test data from the emotion regulation training meet the criteria for normality. This means that further statistical analysis can use parametric statistical methods. Here are the results of the normality tests, shown in the table below.

Table 3.
Normality Test Results

		Tests of Normality					
Results	Grup	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig	Statistic	Df	Sig
Training	Pre test	.191	16	.121	.945	16	.409
Regulation	Post test	.121	16	.200*	.976	16	.928

There are 2 hypotheses in this study, namely:

Ho: There was no difference in the happiness experienced by adolescents, before and after the emotion regulation training

Ha: There is a difference in the happiness experienced by adolescents, before and after the emotion regulation training

To test the above hypothesis, a paired sample t-test was analyzed in the form of paired sample statistics, paired sample correlation, and paired sample test (sig-2tailed). Based on the results of the t-test on the pre-test and post-test data pairs, the average score before the emotion regulation training was 91.63 with a standard deviation of 7,684. After participating in the training, the average post-test score increased to 92.63 with a standard deviation of 8,445, from 16 participants tested. The average score of the post-test was 1 point higher than the pre-test, which showed that there was an increase in happiness experienced by adolescents after emotion regulation training, but it was not statistically significant. As seen in the following table.

Table 4.
Paired Samples Statistics

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pre Test	91.63	16	7.684	1.921
Post Test	92.63	16	8.445	2.111



Although the score increase is only one point, this small change still indicates the direction of the positive effects of the training. In psychological interventions, especially in emotion regulation, change takes time and practice to internalize. Therefore, this small increase can be considered an early sign of training impact, although it is not yet statistically significant.

This pattern of change is also seen on the pretest–posttest bar chart, which shows an increase, but it is not large enough. The effect size calculation (Cohen's *d*) is also in the small-effect category, so the effect of training is present, but it remains weak and likely hampered by the intervention's short duration of only 1 day. This finding is different from the research of Aesijah et al (2016) which obtained significant results. These differences may be due to the longer intervention duration, the presence of a control group, and differences in participants' psychosocial conditions. Orphanage teens have higher emotional distress, so change takes longer.

Some technical limitations that may affect the results include same-day posttests, small sample counts ($n=16$), and the absence of a control group. All of these factors can weaken research findings. Furthermore, the analysis was carried out using a paired sample correlation test. The results of the analysis showed that the correlation value reached 0.852, with a significance value (Sig.) of 0.000 based on 16 data from pre-test and post-test. Because the significance value is $0.000 \leq 0.05$, this shows a difference between the scores obtained in the pre test and post-test. As seen in the following table.

Table 5.

Paired Samples Correlations		
	N	Correlation
Pair 1 Pre test & Post test	16	.852
		Sig.
		.000

Furthermore, the analysis was carried out using a paired-samples t-test; the results showed that the mean difference in value was -1.000, with a standard deviation of 4.442 and a standard average error of 1.111. The value *t* obtained is -0.900 with a degree of freedom of 15 and a significance level of 0.382. Because the significance value is 0.382 is greater than or equal to 0.05, the null (H_0) hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no difference in the teen's happiness levels before and after attending the emotion regulation training. This is shown in the table below.

Table 6.

Paired Samples Test			
Pair 1 Paired Differences	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	95%		
	Confidence		



				Interval of the Difference			
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean	Error	Lower	Upper
Pair 1	Pre-1.000	4.442	1.111	-1.000	1.367	-.900	
test & Post Test							

Discussion

The results showed that emotion regulation training did not significantly increase happiness, despite a small increase in average scores. These findings suggest that short-term training is not enough to produce stable emotional changes. In the theory of emotion regulation (Gross, 1998), internalizing strategies such as reappraisal and adaptive emotional responses require adequate practice and time, so the impact is not immediately visible in a one-day intervention.

When compared to previous studies (Aesijah et al., 2016), the results of this study differ because previous studies used a more robust experimental design, including control groups and follow-up measurements, and longer training durations. These factors are very influential in the appearance of significant changes in happiness. Another contribution to the insignificance of the results was the psychosocial condition of the orphanage adolescents. Emotional distress, limited facilities, and lack of affective support make the change in happiness require a longer process than the general adolescent population. In addition, the short duration of training, small sample size, and same-day posttests also weakened the intervention's effect, even though the material and trainers had been prepared as best as possible through tryouts and the selection of competent trainers.

In addition to emotion regulation, happiness can be increased through gratitude training (three good things) (Laba & Kusumaputri, 2020) and mindfulness (Germer et al., 2024) (Dika & Widyana, 2024). Other influential factors are social support (Sarafino & Smith, in Evalista et al., 2022) and feelings of gratitude and forgiveness (Seligman, in Gunawan, 2020). During the study, social support for adolescents in orphanages appeared minimal due to limited caregiver availability and a large number of residents. This condition has an impact on a lack of attention and emotional support (Damayanti & Rihhandini, 2021), even though affection and a sense of security are the main needs of children (Brazelton & Greenspen (Damayanti & Rihhandini, 2021).

Thus, it can be concluded that overall, emotion regulation training still shows the direction of positive effects, even though it is small. This provides the basis for similar interventions to be carried out over longer durations, with repeated sessions and follow-up evaluations, so that behavior changes can persist and have a stronger impact on adolescent happiness.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of emotion regulation training, and the results showed no statistically significant difference ($p = 0.328 > 0.05$) in the happiness levels of post-intervention orphanage adolescents. These findings theoretically indicate that intrapersonal changes (such as emotion regulation) and improved well-being



cannot occur in a short time frame, supporting the view that the internalization of emotional strategies requires a repetitive, steady learning process. In practice, the orphanage manager is advised to significantly extend the training duration to at least two weeks or add a follow-up booster session to strengthen the adoption of new behaviors. Although non-significant, the marginal increase in the average happiness score from 91.63 to 92.63, supported by observations of active engagement, suggests the program's positive potential. To further validate the effectiveness of the intervention, future research is suggested using a more robust design, such as adding control groups. In addition, an in-depth exploration of the mediating role of social support, or expanding the sample of subjects across orphanages, would enable better generalization of the findings. Thus, it can be concluded that although this intervention has not been statistically significant, it provides an important empirical basis for the need for more intensive and sustainable psychological interventions in the orphanage environment.

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