Friendship Management Training with Prosocial Orientation for Improving Social-Emotional Competence of Middle School Students

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KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Friendship management, Prosocial, Peer acceptance, Social-emotional competence, Students	Background: Social-emotional competence have a high level of urgency to be actualized especially in middle school students because through this competency it is able to prevent the level of delinquency and crime and is able to improve academic achievement in students. This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of friendship management training with prosocial orientation to improve the social-emotional competence of middle school students. Methods: This study used an experimental method with a pretest-posttest control group design. A total of 39 middle school students in Padang City, Indonesia, were selected by a randomization technique to be assigned to a control or experimental group after completing an informed consent. Social-emotional competence was measured using the Social and Emotional Competencies Evaluation Questionnaire (Coelho et al., 2015) developed by researchers. The scale had an Alpha Cronbach of 0.935, indicating high reliability. Results: Result showed that the ANOVA test results showed that friendship management training effectively improved the social-emotional competence of middle school students (F = 6.633; p < 0.05). The effect of treatment was proven to be significant, indicating an increase in the social-emotional competence of students who received prosocial-oriented friendship management training. The average increase in social-emotional competence of students with friendship management training was higher than that of the control group (F = 2,302; p > 0,05). Conclusions: According the results, friendship management training was found to be effective in increasing social-emotional competence of middle school students. Therefore, the training is recommended as a promising program to be implemented in schools to promote social-emotional competence of students.

1. Introduction

Middle school or junior high school in Indonesia is conducted based on the objectives of the 2013 Curriculum according to the Ministry of Education and Culture. The main goal of education is to prepare Indonesian students to live as religious, productive, creative, innovative, and affective citizens who can contribute to the society and nation (Kemendikbud, 2013). The Indonesian 2013 Curriculum does emphasize not only mastery of competence but also character building of students. This is in accordance with the core competencies determined by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which are related to character development and mastery of competencies.

Middle school students are generally 12 to 16 years old, which is a transition from childhood to adulthood known as adolescence period. At this stage, adolescents experience rapid physiological, biological, and cognitive changes which affect their emotional instability. According to Erickson, the main and most important developmental task for adolescents is solving the crisis of identity versus role confusion, constructing their unique sense of identity, finding social environment where they can belong to, and creating meaningful relationship with other people (Rageliene, 2016). In addition, adolescents generally have to deal with various challenging situations, such as increased autonomy, peer pressure, and frequent exposure to the internet (CASEL, 2015).

Due to increased independence, the influence of peers is powerful for adolescents. A good environment

is associated with developing a positive identity, while bad surroundings may lead to an identity crisis (Kitchens & Abell, 2020). A prolonged identity crisis during adolescence will cause several problems, such as increasing deviant behavior, being isolated from society, committing juvenile delinquency, having a split self-image, inability to concentrate on important tasks, and distorted perspective between a sense of urgency and procrastination (Côté, 2018; Hidayah & Huriati, 2017). Therefore, adolescents must be able to fulfill their psychosocial development tasks due to the transactional influence between brain development and psychosocial or interpersonal relationships, considering the many areas of the brain that function to regulate emotions and behavior (Blank et al., 2019).

Several studies have reported that social and emotional competence is connected to learning engagement, future academic success (Nix et al., 2013; Panayiotouÿ et al., 2019), and better well-being (Collie et al., 2019). Social-emotional competence refers to the ability to use acceptable behaviors to interact with others and develop positive relationships (Wu et al., 2018). In addition, emphasized that social-emotional competence is the capacity of an individual to adapt to other people, which is essential for supporting their emotional, social, and cognitive development Carman & Chapparo, 2012; Denham et al., 2012; Ahmed, Aswati, & Melissa, 2020). In other words, social-emotional competence is an individual's ability to adapt to the surrounding environment.

Several factors may affect the increase of social-emotional competence in adolescents. Hurlock (2010) explains that the development of social-emotional competence is influenced by two main factors, namely internal and external factors. Internal factors, such as physical conditions, nervous structures, the muscular system, health, and diseases, arise within individuals. Meanwhile, external factors, including family environment, peers, and cultures, come from outside individuals.

Previous past studies have found that social-emotional competence was positively associated with the acceptance of peers (Losada et al., 2017; Oberle, 2018). Peer acceptance positively influenced the social-emotional competence of junior high school students (Fink et al., 2015 ; Slaughter et al., 2015 ; Oberle, 2018). Likewise, pro-social behavior positively influenced the scoail-emotional competence of adolescents (Akelaitis & Lisinskienė, 2018). The presence of peers is an essential factor in the social relations of youths. Positive friendships between teenagers can help to foster a sense of self-identity in the social environment, facilitate the development of becoming more independent, prevent mental health disorders, assist in the construction of self-concept, brain development, and others (Orben et al., 2020). In other words, having intimate friendships during this age stage will also help their social and emotional development (Damayanti, 2017).

Various interventions have been conducted at different educational levels to improve social-emotional competence, reduce risky behaviors, and promote well-being in youths (Durlak et al., 2015). Friendship management training in this study is a program intended to promote the social-emotional competence of adolescents. Peer acceptance and prosocial behavior are integrated into a training module that covers several aspects, including validation and caring, intimate exchange, companionship and recreation, help and guidance, conflict and betrayal, and conflict resolution.

2. Methodology

The present study attempted to investigate the effectiveness of prosocial-oriented friendship management in improving social-emotional competence of middle school students. The research used an experimental design with pre-test and post-test control group design.

Table 1. Research design

Group		Pre-test	Treatment	Post-test
Experiment	Random	O_1	X	O_2
Control	Random	O_1	-	O_2

Notes: O_1 = pre-test; X = friendship management training; O_2 = post-test

As shown in Table 1, the experimental group received the treatment, which was friendship management training, whereas the control group did not receive any treatment. The training was conducted for about two weeks and led by an experienced trainer who was also a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Andalas University.

The training module was developed by the researchers based on the process stated by Borg and Gall (1983) consisting of ten steps. The module integrated two main theories: peer acceptance (Parker & Asher, 1993) and prosocial behavior (Eisenberg & Mussen, 1989). Construct validity of the module was carried out by two experts in psychology in which the mean score from Aiken's V formula was 0.82. This score indicated that the module was valid to be used as a resource in training.

Table 2. The steps of friendship management training

Step	Main Activity
Step 1. Introduction and pre-test	Subjects were informed about the training activities and were asked to fulfill the initial measurement of social-emotional competence
Step 2. Peer acceptance	Subjects learned the concept of peer acceptance in daily situations from a video played by the trainer
Step 3. Validation and caring	Subjects learned the forms and benefits of showing care towards other people through an emotional board game
Step 4. Intimate exchange	Subjects learned and experienced the benefits of intimate exchange through peer counseling
Step 5. Companionship and recreation	Subjects learned positive activities which can be spent with friends and experienced recreation through word games within a group
Step 6. Help and guidance	Subjects learned forms and factors influencing help and experienced guidance through a group activity to develop cooperation.
Step 7. Conflict and betrayal	Subjects learned types and factors of conflicts through a role-playing game named *Werewolf*
Step 8. Conflict resolution	Subjects learned effective ways to solve problems with friends and played a group activity to experience conflict resolution
Step 9. Evaluation and post-test	Subjects provided feedback regarding the training and were asked to fulfill the post-training measurement

Research Subjects

The population of this study was all students of one public middle school in Padang, Indonesia. Characteristics of the subjects were students of the public middle school ranging from 12 to 16 years old, had a low category of social-emotional competence based on the pretest score, and were willing to participate in the training, proven by a written informed consent from the parents or guardians of the subjects.

A total of 39 students (43.6% male; 56.4% female) who fulfilled the requirements participated in the research. The students were randomly divided into two groups in which 19 students were assigned to the control group while 20 students were assigned to the experimental group. Randomization was applied to ensure that equivalent groups provided equal opportunities for all subjects to receive treatment (Kantowitz et al., 2014). Comparing the experimental and control group with randomization aimed to determine whether the treatment given in the research has a certain effect on the subjects so

that it can be concluded that the differences that occur in the two groups are due to the treatment.

Instruments

Data in this research were collected using one instrument, the Social and Emotional Competencies Evaluation Questionnaire (QACSE) developed by the researchers from Coelho et al. (2015). This Likert scale consisted of 32 items measuring five aspects: social awareness, social isolation, self-control, social anxiety, and relationship skills. Five answer choices for each item ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). An example of items is, "Even though there are differences, I can maintain good friendships." The scale had an Alpha Cronbach of 0.935, indicating high reliability.

Data Analysis

The data analysis carried out in this study was descriptive and inferential analysis methods. Descriptive analysis was used to describe both groups' mean scores and deviation standard of the pre-test and post-test. Meanwhile, inferential statistics were used to analyze the effect of prosocial-oriented friendship management training on social-emotional competence. The analysis used was Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) using statistical software. Assumption tests were carried out first, including the normality and homogeneity test of the dependent variable.

3. Result and Discussion

The research data were analyzed based on the pre-test and post-test scores for both groups. The mean and standard deviation scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of Social-Emotional Competence

Measurement	Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test (O_1)	Control	19	84.53	7.89
	Experiment	20	87.95	6.13
Post-test (O_2)	Control	19	91.11	6.11
	Experiment	20	99.95	17.48

Social emotional competence of subjects was divided into two measurements, namely the initial measurement (O_1) and the post measurement (O_2). During the pretest, the experimental group had a higher average social-emotional competence score (87.95) than the control group (84.53). However, considering the standard deviation of the two groups which was 7.89 for the control group and 6.13 for the experimental group, it can be stated that the two groups were not significantly different.

Social-emotional competence during the post-test depicted different results in both groups. The control group that received no treatment experienced an increase in social-emotional competence to 91.11, while the experimental group that received the treatment experienced a higher increase to nearly 100. Therefore, this result showed that changes in social-emotional competence caused by the friendship management training were higher than that of the control group.

Assumption tests

The ANOVA analysis test was preceded by prerequisite tests which included normality test and homogeneity test. The normality test was measured by using the Kolmogrov-Smirnov test. As can be seen in Table 4, social-emotional competence in all groups was normally distributed ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4. Normality test of Social-Emotional Competence

Group	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistics	**n**	**p**
Pre-test			
Control group	0.821	19	0.511

Experimental group	0.843	20	0.476
Post-test			
Control group	0.642	19	0.804
Experimental group	10.079	20	0.195

Note: $p > 0.05$ indicates that the data is normally distributed

In addition to the normality test, the homogeneity test results using Levene's test indicated that the significance score for the pre-test was 0.296 while the post-test was 0.061 ($p > 0.05$). In other words, the variance of social-emotional competence of the pre-test and post-test was homogenous. Thus, it can be concluded that the research data fulfilled the assumption tests required for the ANOVA test.

ANOVA test

The ANOVA test was conducted to test the research hypothesis. Hypothesis testing aimed to determine the effect of friendship management training on improving social-emotional competence of middle school students.

Table 5. The ANOVA test results of Social-Emotional Competence pre-test

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Treatment	114.211	1	114.211	2.302	0.138
Error	1835.687	37	49.613		
Total	1949.897	38			

Table 5 illustrates that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of social-emotional competence in the control group and the experimental group (F = 2.302; p > 0.05).

Table 6. The ANOVA test results of Social-Emotional Competence post-test

Source of Variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	p
Treatment	770.877	1	770.877	6.633	0.014
Error	4299.789	37	116.211		
Total	5070.667	38			

Table 6 reported that friendship management training had a significant effect on social-emotional competence (F = 6.633; p < 0.05). As illustrated in Figure 1, the increase of social-emotional competence was higher when given the treatment which was friendship management training although the social-emotional competence of the control group also increased which was not as significant as the experimental group.
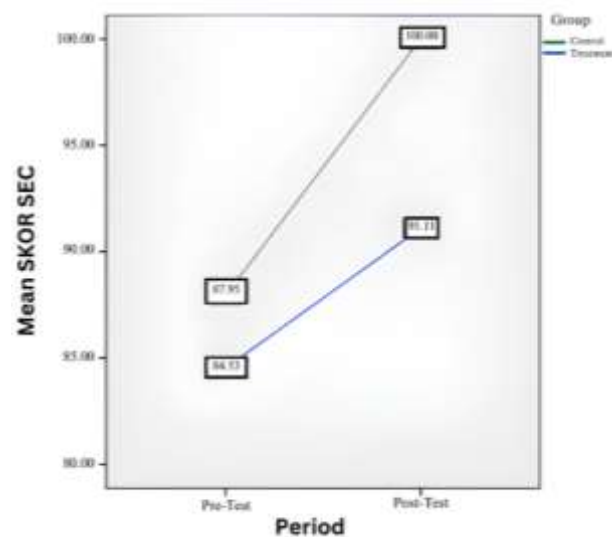
Figure. 1. Graph showing the increase of Social-Emotional Competence

Based on the results, prosocial-oriented friendship management training improved social-emotional competence, which was found to be significant ($F = 6.633$; $p < 0.05$). In addition, the average increase in social-emotional competence of the experimental group who received friendship management training was higher than that of the control group. Therefore, the research hypothesis was accepted.

Middle school students are generally teenagers with an age range of 12 and 16 years old who are currently in a puberty period. In that period, having a good relationship with peers was one of the most important aspects of their development because it will affect the physical and psychological well-being (Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Rubin et al., 2015). A research by Tuovinen et al. (2020) reported that increasing social involvement had a substantially positive influence on increasing self-esteem for adolescents. In addition, peer relationships represent an important component for teenagers, especially for social, emotional and cognitive development (Berndt, 2002; Bagwell & Schmidt, 2011; Rubin et al., 2015). To achieve that, teenagers must have good social-emotional skills, which are more easily formed than cognitive skills and also have potential benefits for various academic and life outcomes for adolescents (Gutman & Schoon, 2013; Duckworth & Yeager, 2015).

Social-emotional competence refers to an ability where individuals are able to communicate with other people, handle emotions, act on events that occur around them, increase their learning involvement in the future, and also achieve success in the academic field (Alzahrani et al., 2019). This competence is believed to help individuals, especially students, gain behavior self-monitoring and self-regulation in the learning process (Wilson et al., 2001; Zins et al., 2004; Zhoc et al., 2018). The social-emotional learning process also includes affective-motivational factors and social, behavioral outcomes. The social behavioral outcomes are competencies in interpersonal relationships such as communication skills, positive attitudes, leadership, adaptation to school, and prosocial interactions (Kim et al., 2015; Moffitt et al., 2011).

In the current study, students received friendship management training, which integrates aspects of peer acceptance and prosocial behavior. This integration conducted in which peer acceptance (Oberle, 2018) and prosocial behavior (Akelaitis & Lisinskienė, 2018) had a significant positive effect on the social-emotional competence of middle school students. The current study has proven that friendship management training effectively improves social-emotional competence in junior high school students. This finding is consistent with previous research that children's socio-emotional competence increased significantly through traditional cooperative games with experiential learning methods (Rahayu & Fasikhah, 2021). However, these traditional games only improve several aspects of socio-emotional competence, such as self-management, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Friendship management training was delivered through a module consisting of six main stages, which covered aspects of peer acceptance (i.e., validation and caring, conflict and betrayal, companionship and recreation, help and guidance, intimate exchange, and conflict resolution) and prosocial behavior (i.e., sharing, helping, cooperating, honesty, donating, and considering the welfare of others). This training module was developed to assist students in various activities to improve their social-emotional competence.

In the first stage, rapport and initial measurements was conducted by using the QACSE instruments to determine the social-emotional competence of subjects. In the second stage, subjects learned the concept of peer acceptance in everyday situations using videos. The concept of peer acceptance is important for teenagers because peers facilitate the development of teenagers to become independent adults, foster a sense of self-identity in the social environment, and build stronger affiliations with their peer groups (Orben et al. al., 2020).

Following that, in the third stage, subjects learned the forms and benefits of showing concern for others by using emotional board games in which each student has the opportunity to express their opinions about emotions to friends. This activity is related to one aspect of social-emotional competence which is social awareness, characterized by the ability to empathize with other people, respect individuals and other groups, and recognize similarities and differences (Dewi, 2016; Hadi, 2011). Through this, teenagers understand that each person has a basic need to be part of a social group (Dunbar, 2018) by showing this can increase a person's identification with the group.

In the fourth stage, subjects learned and experienced the benefits of intimate exchanges through peer counseling sessions. This activity was expected to improve adolescents' communication skills with peers (Moreira, et al., 2021). Quality friendships will result in intimate relationships, and foster mutual trust, which then allows them to disclose personal information (Salsabila & Maryatmi, 2019). According to Allgaier et al., (2015), honesty is a tendency to be sincere and fair with other people, which means that people with high honesty show cooperative behavior and are able to build good relationships. Intimate exchange in friendships requires children to develop the necessary social competence to disclose personal information appropriately while at the same time providing emotional support to peers where honesty and sharing is required in disclosing this information (Gaertner et al., 2011; Beazidou & Botsoglou, 2016).

Next, in the fifth stage, subjects learned various positive activities with friends and experienced recreation using word games in groups. This activity aimed to increase social involvement, gain unique experience in managing their activities independently, and avoid social isolation (Fomina, et al., 2020). Social isolation is a condition in which individuals have difficulty interacting with other people, avoiding social contact and relationships (Coelho et al., 2015). This activity was expected to increase social-emotional competence because students will spend fun time together with their friends

In the sixth stage, subjects learned forms and factors that will influence assistance and guidance through a group activity called "building towers from straws". This method was reported to increase social-emotional competence because when building towers, students are trained to build relationships with group members, express ideas and opinions clearly, listen to ideas and opinions of other members, work together and negotiate, and seek or offer help. In addition, teenagers who can provide assistance to their peers will have a sense of social identity, relationships with other people, which lead to personal satisfaction (Inagaki & Orehek, 2017; Ballard et al., 2019). Emotionally, this will be able to reduce feelings of stress, anxiety and loneliness (Morelli et al., 2015).

In the seventh stage, subjects learned the types and factors of conflict through role-playing games known as "Werewolf". This method can increase social-emotional competence because the participants are trained to face and resolve conflicts that arise during the interrogations in the game. Conflict and betrayal is the extent to which the relationship is marked by arguments, disagreements, resentment, and distrust, and the extent to which conflict can affect the quality of the relationship (Parker & Asher, 1993). According to Hartup, the quality of friendship is determined by how well a friendship

relationship functions and how well a person can resolve existing conflicts (in Brendgen et al., 2001). Favorable conflict resolution results lead to positive conflict, while adverse conflict resolution results in negative conflict.

Next, in the eighth stage, subjects learned effective ways to resolve conflicts with peers through a game called "1 Ship Many Captains". This activity aimed to ensure that teenagers were solution-oriented during conflict situations, which can improve the quality of friendships, increase intimacy, and even benefit psychological adjustment (Thayer et al., 2008; Gao et al., 2017). Even adolescents can create and maintain a friendly environment for their psychological well-being (Ghorbanshiroudi et al., 2011; Marroquín & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2015). This method can increase social-emotional competence because students are required to be able to coordinate their actions to achieve common goals.

Finally, in the final stage, subjects were asked to provide feedback regarding the training and were asked again to complete the post-test using the QACSE tool as the evaluation material for the training that had been implemented.

Therefore, it can be concluded that friendship management training with a prosocial orientation can improve the social-emotional competence of middle school students. This research clearly showed that adolescents with higher prosocial behavior will be liked by their peers, which will affect their social-emotional competence. Thus, these findings provide recommendations for various parties such as educational institutions, teachers, parents, and practitioners as an effort to develop teenagers' social emotional competencies that can be implemented and are useful in various aspects of teenagers' lives.

Despite this finding, this research has limitations that can be considered in further research. First, the scope of research subjects can be expanded not only to the city of Padang. Second, although this research has focused on internal and external factors of social-emotional competence, future researchers can investigate the influence of other variables on social-emotional competence, for example the role of social identity, parenting patterns, economic factors, and others which are important indicators in adolescence for development. social emotional competence abilities for adolescents themselves

4. Conclusion and future scope

According the results, friendship management training was found to be effective in increasing social-emotional competence of middle school students. The average increase in social-emotional competence of students who received friendship management training was higher than that of the control group. Therefore, the training is recommended as a promising program to be implemented in schools to promote social-emotional competence of students.

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