

## The Effectiveness of Psychological First Aid , Active Listening, and Emotional Stabilization Training in Mitigating Mental Health Issues Among Adolescents in Schools

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**Abstract:** This Community Service Activity was held based on the need in the field for 'people' who can be trusted by teenage students to help them solve problems such as bullying, domestic violence, free sex and many more. This training aims to provide knowledge and improve the skills of high school students in Bandung City and its surroundings in providing initial psychological assistance as well as active listening practices and emotional stabilization for their colleagues who need help in solving their problems. The students were officially invited to receive training in Psychological First Aid, Active Listening and Emotional Stabilization online and offline which is equivalent to 36 Learning Hours. It is hoped that these 19 students can become 'first responder' and reduce the serious and prolonged psychological impacts on other students who have problems so that they can avoid serious psychological disorders. Evaluation of this training activity was carried out by measuring their knowledge of the Psychological First Aid and Understanding of Emotions material. The results of the calculations showed that their knowledge and understanding increased and varied significantly moderately.

### Introduction

According to Kompas.id (2023), on a global scale, approximately one in seven children aged 10 to 19 years old encounters mental disorders. The mental well-being of students warrants diligent consideration. Nevertheless, this issue remains largely unaddressed by numerous parties. I Nyoman Rudi Kurniawan, the Acting Director of Junior High Schools at the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, has asserted that there is an excessive emphasis on academic development and achievements. However, it is imperative to acknowledge the pervasive influence of mental health on all aspects of a teenager's life. The mounting activity in the digital domain possesses the potential to exert a substantial influence on mental well-being. Christina Setianingrum, a Young Partner at UNICEF Indonesia, further elaborated on this issue, stating, "In the context of social media interactions, students may encounter content that is not suitable for their age group. Furthermore, they are susceptible to becoming victims of bullying.

In the past year, approximately 500,000 children in Indonesia have experienced sexual exploitation and abuse

in the virtual world. As many as 29 percent of these children have shared personal information with people they have never met in person. Other research shows that many teenagers stay up until midnight. They often feel anxious, envious, and dissatisfied with their lives after seeing posts uploaded by other social media users. They are also busy comparing their lives with others' (DM, Mardiana, & Maryana, 2024). According to data from the Women and Children Protection Agency (PPA), 399 out of 433 cases of violence that occurred in West Java in 2023 were experienced by women. The 6-12 age group was the most affected by violence, with 139 cases. The 13-17 age group followed with 129 cases. Other data shows that 129 of the victims were elementary school students, 101 were junior high school students, and 96 were high school students. Although there is no official data on where the violence occurred, it still requires immediate attention (Republika, 2023). Additionally, the Bandung City Education Office revealed data from a promiscuity survey in 2022. The survey was conducted with 60 adolescents under the age of 14. The survey found that 56 percent of the respondents admitted to having had sex (Republika, 2022). This is certainly not good news. In fact, it should serve as a warning sign for families and the education system.

It is evident that adolescent students in Bandung encounter a multitude of challenges, rendering it impractical to address each issue individually. However, it is evident that these adolescents require assistance in addressing their challenges to prevent the escalation of their circumstances and avert potential mental health complications. According to Stuart (2013), adolescence is a factor that has a significant impact on mental health due to the many changes experienced by adolescents. Furthermore, during the developmental stage of adolescence, an array of additional challenges emerge, encompassing social, emotional, physical, familial, educational, and peer-related issues. Elvine Gunawan, a psychiatrist in Bandung, has stated that the prevailing stigma surrounding mental health issues constitutes an impediment to effective treatment and care. This stigma frequently hinders patients from seeking treatment, particularly among adolescents, due to a lack of awareness among parents regarding mental health concerns. Parents frequently deny and prohibit their children from seeking mental health assistance" (detik.com, 2022). In addition to the role of parents, the reliability of psychological assistance or services provided through schools or Community Health Centers (Puskem) remains questionable. This phenomenon is not solely attributable to the limited number of professionals in the field; students also tend to feel uneasy engaging in discourse with individuals who are considerably older than them. Concurrently, individuals require assistance from external sources when confronted with challenges such as bullying, depression, dating violence, promiscuity, and related issues.

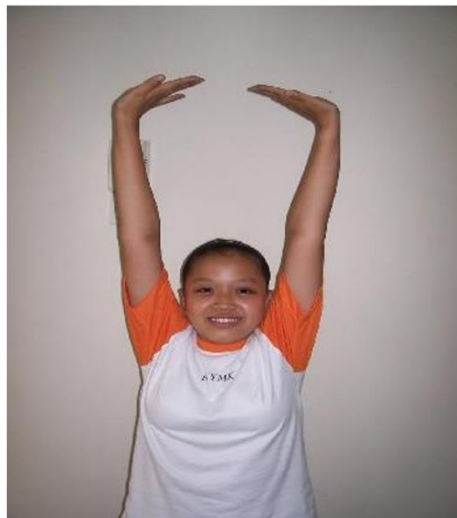
Psychological First Aid is one method of alleviating the burden experienced by individuals with psychological problems. Psychological First Aid is a pragmatic approach that assists individuals in avoiding protracted stress (Snider et al., 2012; Landoy et al., 2015). The provision of Psychological First Aid can be undertaken by any individual who possesses the requisite knowledge and skills. This ability is not confined to professionals alone, as these competencies are inherently present in all individuals (WHO, 2011). The provision of initial assistance is intended to extend until the receipt of proper help from professionals or the resolution of the crisis (Kitchener et al., 2017).

Psychological First Aid (PFA) is a form of psychological treatment used in crisis situations that aims to reduce the negative impact of traumatic experiences, strengthen the short-term and long-term adaptive functions of survivors, and accelerate the recovery process of survivors. In the provision of preliminary psychological assistance, the possession of the

capacity to both listen and stabilize emotions is imperative. These competencies can be imparted to the general public, including high school students.

### **Methodology**

The methodology employed in this community service initiative entails training through face-to-face lectures, incorporating material on Psychological First Aid utilizing the observational, listening, and information/help provision model (WHO, 2011). The efficacy of this model in alleviating the trauma experienced by students affected by flooding has been demonstrated in numerous studies (see Ramirez et al., 2013). The Psychological First Aid training is then supplemented with role-playing, which teaches students active listening skills and emotional stabilization techniques. The objective of this training is to impart the knowledge and skills necessary to provide initial psychological assistance to peers confronted with challenges such as dating violence, depression, anxiety, and other prevalent issues among students of this demographic. The competencies they acquire are intended to serve as a preventative measure, with the objective of averting the onset of persistent mental disorders among students. The following points are addressed in this training: 1. This text is an introduction to the subject of youth issues in Bandung City 2. Psychological First Aid 3. Active Listening Techniques 4. Active listening roleplay 5. Various Emotional Stabilization Techniques 6. The implementation of Emotional Stabilization Techniques is imperative.



**Figure 1.** Student trainees demonstrate one of the emotional stabilization techniques



**Figure 2.** One technique for stabilizing emotions

The figure above illustrates one of the techniques employed to stabilize students' emotions. The students who participated in this training were representatives from 11 schools around the city of Bandung. These students were invited in writing and selected by their teachers based on the following criteria: they were able to communicate well, were members of the student council or school activity unit, and were willing to participate in the training until its completion. Seven schools responded by sending students to participate, namely SMAN 1 Lembang, SMAN 20 Bandung, SMAN 2 Bandung, SMA Kartika XIX-2 Bandung, SMA Pasundan 2 Bandung, SMAN 12 Bandung, and SMAN 1 Bandung. The training program incorporated a combination of lectures and role-playing exercises, which were conducted in both online and offline settings. The online session was held on June 2, and the in-person session took place on June 26, with 19 high school students in attendance.

## Result and Discussion

The success of the training was analyzed using a one-posttest design, which measured their knowledge of providing Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Emotional Understanding. The instrument consisted of 20 statement items from which they had to choose their answers. After undergoing validity and reliability tests, six items were obtained with a reliability of 0.817. The results of the analysis using descriptive statistics are as follows:

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis Results

	N	mean	SD	SE	Coefficient of Variation
PFA and Emotional Understanding	19	4.474	1.896	0.435	0.424

Then, an analysis of 19 samples showed that the average PFA score was 4.474, with a standard deviation of 1.896. The standard error, which measures how far the sample mean is from the population mean, was 0.435. A coefficient of variation of 0.424 indicates moderate variation in the data compared to the mean. A mean PFA

score of 4.474 indicates a moderate level of PFA in general. However, the fairly high standard deviation of 1.896 indicates considerable variation in PFA scores among the samples. The coefficient of variation of 0.424 shows that the variation in the PFA data is moderate compared to the mean. Then, one-sample T-test calculations were performed, and the results are as follows:

Table 2. Sample T-test

	T	Df	P
PFA and Emotional Understanding	3.387	18	0.003

A one-sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the mean scores for PFA and Emotion Recognition differed significantly from a specific value. The resulting t-value was 3.387 with 18 degrees of freedom, and the p-value was 0.003. A t-value of 3.387 indicates that the difference between the mean PFA score and the reference value tested, which was 3, is quite large. A p-value of 0.003, which is less than 0.05, indicates that this difference is statistically significant. This means that we can reject the null hypothesis (that there is no difference) and conclude that the average PFA and Emotion Recognition scores in this sample are significantly different from the reference value of 3. This indicates that the factors influencing PFA and emotion recognition in this sample warrant further study to understand the causes and implications.

From the data analyzed, it was found that Psychological First Aid (PFA) training, active listening skills, and emotional stabilization techniques provided to 19 high school students in Greater Bandung were able to improve their understanding of mental health and peer support skills. Statistical test results showed an average PFA understanding score of 4.474 with a p-value of 0.003, which means that the improvement was significant. Interestingly, the moderate variation in scores (coefficient of variation 0.424) indicates that despite the improvement, there are still differences in abilities between individuals. This phenomenon reflects the potential of students as first responders in psychosocial issues at school, although further support is needed to ensure that their capacities are more evenly distributed.

The results of this study are in line with previous findings that PFA can increase self-efficacy and confidence in dealing with crisis situations (Chandra et al., 2014; Everly et al., 2014). Interestingly, in the Indonesian context, particularly in Bandung, students face mental health challenges influenced by academic pressure, exposure to social media, and vulnerability to bullying and violence (Sinaga, 2023; Soraya & Amanda, 2023). Thus, this type of training is relevant not only as a technical intervention but also as a preventive strategy in schools.

There is a tendency for peer-based approaches to be more accepted by adolescents, as they often feel more comfortable talking to friends than adults or professionals (Stuart, 2013). This phenomenon indicates that empowering students as peer helpers can fill the gap left by the limited number of mental health professionals in schools and health centers (Wamad, 2022). However, challenges remain. First, variations in student achievement show that not all training participants have the same readiness to become first responders. Second, stigma surrounding mental health issues remains a major barrier to seeking help (detik.com, 2022). In developing countries like Indonesia, structural barriers ranging from limited resources, policy support, to cultural resistance make the sustainability of such programs a challenge in itself.

By comparing the global context, we see that PFA practices in other countries, such as in disaster victim management in the Philippines (Landoy et al., 2015) or school children in the United States (Ramirez et al., 2013), also show similar effectiveness. This means that there is a recurring pattern that simple skills such as active listening and emotional stabilization can be game changers in mitigating psychological impacts, especially for adolescents.

## Conclusion

Thus, this study confirms that training in PFA, active listening, and emotional stabilization effectively improves high school students' capacity to become first responders for their peers. These findings not only provide empirical evidence of the program's effectiveness but also reflect the urgent need for school-based community strategies to bridge the limitations of professional mental health services in Indonesia. More broadly, this training contributes to the creation of a safer, more supportive, and more adaptive school ecosystem for mental health issues. Several limitations in this study should be noted. First, the number of participants was relatively small (19 students), so the results should be generalized with caution. Second, the study design used a one-group posttest only, without a control group, so the increase in students' understanding cannot be fully attributed to the intervention. Third, the measurements only focused on cognitive aspects (knowledge) and did not touch on real behavioral changes in the long term. In addition, the limited context of implementation in Greater Bandung means that these findings may not necessarily reflect the conditions of adolescents in other regions of Indonesia, which have different social and cultural diversity.

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