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The Effectiveness of Expressive Writing Guidance Technique on the Expression of Emotion and Stress of State Junior High School

Ulya Sofia Irda*, Muhammad Nur Wangid

Department Counseling and Guidance, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Yogyakarta State University, 55281, Indonesia

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* Corresponding author:

E-mail: ulyasofia.2023@student.uny.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Inconsistency of findings regarding the effectiveness of expressive writing guidance techniques on emotional and stress expression. This study aims to determine the effectiveness between the expression of emotion and stress of students who get *expressive writing* guidance compared to discussion techniques. The research method used is *an experiment*, with the type of true experiment design. Involving 64 students from grade 9 of State Junior High School, 3 Depok were divided into two experimental groups ($n= 32$) and control groups ($n= 32$) through *a cluster sampling*. This study was conducted in three stages: *pretest*, *treatment* and *posttest*. Construct validity fit model category. The reliability of scale was tested using *Cronbach's Alpha*, and a coefficient of emotional expression of 0.872 and stress of 0.833 was obtained, indicating that the level of reliability high category. Data collection techniques using the emotional expression scale and stress scale. The data analysis technique used is the *MANOVA*. The test results showed that the treatment simultaneously affected emotional expression and stress with Wilks' Lambda = 0.001, $p < 0.05$. Therefore, guidance techniques for expressive writing effectively express emotions and stress in State Junior High School 3 Depok students.

1. Introduction

Expressive writing is an action in increasing understanding of internal and external individuals through writing; the purpose of expressive writing is for individuals to minimize tension, fear and anxiety, and improve adaptability in solving problems, being able to channel creativity in individuals by freely expressing whatever is being felt without fear in expressing emotions stored feelings and poured in the form of Writing (Halik et al., 2022). Writing can help individuals channel pent-up feelings, which has the potential to reduce stress, improve adaptability and allow individuals to express themselves freely without fear of judgment, which can stimulate creativity. Not only that, expressive writing can change the way

individuals behave because their negative emotions are properly channeled (Anggarawati et al., 2021).

In this modern era, adolescents face various emotional and social challenges that can affect their mental health. Junior High School (SMP) is an important phase in individual development, where students experience many physical and psychological changes. Data from the Ministry of Education and Culture shows that around 30% of junior high school students experience significant stress due to academic pressures, social relationships, and hormonal changes (Kemdikbud, 2020). This is reinforced by data released by UNICEF, which says that around 40% of students in Indonesia report experiencing high levels of stress due to academic pressure and social problems (UNICEF, 2021).

Problems that often occur in adolescence when associated with emotional expression are problems related to breaking up with boyfriends and girlfriends in adolescents, causing sad emotions so that they behave withdrawn or moody (Al Baqi, 2015). In addition, problems that trigger adolescents to have negative emotional expressions are characterized by adolescents who tend to isolate themselves due to having families that are different from those in general, such as broken homes, making these adolescents express emotions in unhealthy ways (Zulkefli & Mustapha, 2016). Adolescents who harm their friends by bullying and injuring their friends to death are negative behaviors associated with unhealthy expressions of student emotions (Menesini & Salmivalli, 2017).

Indicating that these negative behaviors often manifest an inability to manage emotions well. Then, the body odor that adolescents have during puberty makes them feel embarrassed by their body odor, so adolescents tend to withdraw by staying away from their friends due to sweat that causes body odor (Alidia, 2018). Physical changes can contribute to emotional problems. In addition, many social media reports show news such as children who kill their parents because of trivial problems, children who commit violence because of women's problems, and suicide. This can happen because of a lack of control of emotions in individuals so that it is easy for them to release negative emotions by committing violence or even hurting themselves (Abadi et al., 2023).

Stress is prone to be experienced by adolescents. Stress is a response to suppressed emotions that can interfere with health conditions (Suratmini & Afriani, 2019). Stress, as an emotional response to experienced pressure, is often a significant problem among adolescents. This agrees with Dafiq, who said that adolescents are individuals who experience a transition period from childhood to adulthood, which begins when individuals are physically (sexually) mature and ends when individuals reach adulthood.

Stress is a pressure felt within the individual. Stress is caused by an imbalance between the expectations and reality desired by the individual (Dafiq et al., 2023). Adolescents who are in the transition phase from children to adults experience various changes that can trigger stress. Dafiq highlighted that this transitional period involves complex physical and psychological development, which can create

emotional instability. Stress in adolescents is often caused by an imbalance between expectations and the reality faced, which is that this pressure arises when adolescents feel unable to meet existing demands, both from themselves and the environment. In adolescents, it can interfere with cognitive function and the ability to make decisions that will function as self-control (Wilujeng et al., 2023). This can interfere with adolescent cognitive function, including the ability to make decisions and control themselves. Stress is any problem or self-solving demand that disturbs the balance in humans. If self-adjustment is unsuccessful, it will indirectly generate more demands than the ability to adjust. In this case, there will be a risk of physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral disruption (Aulia Maharani et al., 2017).

Lowering angry emotions in expressive writing can also regulate the expression of negative, angry emotions in MTS children (Ainur et al., 2023). Other benefits are that expressive writing guidance techniques help reduce anxiety due to insecurity in Vocational High School students (Nurul Fadilah et al., 2023). The same thing is also experienced by final-semester students who benefit from expressive writing, which helps reduce the emotional anxiety score of final-year students in completing their thesis (Fajrin et al., 2022). Expressive writing is effective for reducing stress in adolescents with albinism and shows no difference in stress reduction between subjects with introverted personalities and subjects with extroverted personalities (Aulia Maharani et al., 2017). Expressive writing is effective in helping students understand the steps to manage emotions by achieving a new understanding of how to manage emotions well. Writing can express experiences, reduce stress, clear the mind and stabilize emotions (Halik et al., 2022).

However, other studies have also found that expressive writing techniques are less effective. The implementation of expressive writing techniques faces obstacles, including the lack of enthusiasm of participants, which is thought to be caused by a nonoptimal understanding of the techniques provided (Habsari, 2019). In addition, expressive writing is ineffective in reducing test anxiety or improving test scores (Myers et al., 2021). In terms of other anxiety, it was found that expressive writing was not effective in reducing job search anxiety in fresh graduate students who were looking for work (Mustikasari & Raihana, 2019). On the other hand, research also uses expressive writing treatment on young people with lupus. The treatment turned out to be less effective on the subjective well-being of young people with lupus. However, expressive writing activities can make young people with lupus feel more relieved in channeling their emotions (Rovieq et al., 2021).

Not all studies show consistent results regarding the effectiveness of expressive writing. Some studies show that this technique is more effective for certain groups and emotional conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct further research to determine the exact effectiveness of expressive writing in different contexts. The aim is to determine the extent to which the expressive writing guidance technique is effective or not in expressing the emotions and stress of State Junior High School 3 Depok students.

2. Methodology

This research uses a quantitative approach with a pure experimental design. with two groups: the experimental and control groups. Both were given a *pretest and posttest* (Lavery, 2018). This study used a *cluster sampling* technique to select a sample from the student population of State Junior High School 3 Depok in 2024/2025. The population consists of 384 students divided into three grade levels, namely grades 7, 8, and 9, with each level having four classes.

The sample selection strategy was conducted using the lottery method. Each class of the three abbreviations was given a lottery number, and two lots were randomly selected. This lottery process resulted in selecting classes 9A and 9C as research samples. This simple random sampling technique is selected based on the principle that every member of the population has an equal chance of being selected as a sample. It aims to minimize bias and ensure fair representation of the target population (Creswell, 2018).

This study's independent variable (X) is the *Expressive Writing* Guidance Technique. The dependent variable (Y1) is Emotional Expression and (Y2) Stress. Data collection instruments used Emotional Expression Instrument This instrument measures emotional expression using the MoVEE (*Measure of Verbally Expressed Emotion*) scale developed by Jacobson (2015), which consists of 4 dimensions: love, happiness, anger and sadness divided into 19 items and stress instruments. This instrument measures stress levels with the PPS-10 scale (*Perceived Stress Scale*) developed by Sheldon Cohen (1994), which consists of 3 dimensions: unprecedented, *uncontrollable and overload*. The three dimensions have 10 question items. The results of the emotional expression and stress scale construct validity test in the fit model status are shown in the table below. The emotional expression and stress validity test results which can be described in table 1.

Table 1. Emotional Expression and Stress Validity Test Results

Value	Limit	Suitability Index	Description
<i>Chi-square</i> (Emotional Expression)	>0,05	$\chi^2 = 148.238$; df = 122; p-value = 0.053	Model fit
GFI (Emotional Expression)	>0,9	0,920	Model fit
CFI (Emotional Expression)	>0,95	0,977	Model fit
<i>Chi-square</i> (Stress)	>0,05	$\chi^2 = 20,011$; df = 21; p-value = 0.521	Model fit
RMSEA (Stress)	<0,08	0,00	Model fit
CFI (Stress)	>0,95	1,000	Model fit

The reliability test results using *Cronbach's alpha* produce reliable data with a reference. The instrument can be trustworthy if *Cronbach alpha* > 0.60, while if <0.60, then the instrument is not reliable (Ghozali, 2018). The reliability test results of emotional expression and stress which can be described in table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results of Emotional Expression and Stress

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Description
Emotional Expression	0,872	19	Reliable
Stress	0,833	10	Reliable

The data analysis technique used the normality test with the *Shapiro-Wilk* test and the homogeneity test with *Lavene's Test*. Then, the hypothesis test using the *MANOVA*.

3. Result and Discussion

Normality test to see if the data obtained is normally or abnormally distributed. The normality test of the data results obtained from the *pretest* and *posttest* in the study used the *Shapiro-Wilk test*. The normality test of pretest and posttest of emotional expression and stress which can be described in table 3.

Table 3. Normality Test of Pretest and Posttest of Emotional Expression and Stress

Statistics	Pretest		Posttest	
	Experiment Class	Class Control	Experiment Class	Class Control
Df	32	32	32	32
Sig. (Emotion expression)	0,188	0,148	0,116	0,717
Sig. (Stress)	0,661	0,678	0,387	0,526
Significance Level	0,05		0,05	
Conclusion	Normally Distributed Data	Normally Distributed Data	Normally Distributed Data	Normally Distributed Data

Using Levene's test, the homogeneity test was obtained from the *study's posttest* data from the experimental and control groups. The *posttest* results in the experimental and control classes, both from emotional expression and stress, showed a number greater than 0.05. For test of homogeneity of emotional expression and stress which can be described in table 4.

Table 4. Test of Homogeneity of Emotional Expression and Stress

Statistics	Emotional Expression	Stress
<i>Levene Statistic</i>	0,381	0,410
level	0,05	
Conclusion	Both classes are homogeneous	Both classes are homogeneous

There is a significant difference between the expression of emotions and stress of students who get *expressive writing* guidance compared to discussion techniques. Proven by the following table 5.

Table 5. Hypothesis Test Results

Wilks' Lambda	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig. (p-value)	Partial Squared	Eta
	7,784	2000	61.000	0,001	0,203	

It can be concluded that the *MANOVA* output of the Multivariate Test Wilks' Lambda there is an overall significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in the combination of dependent variables, namely emotional expression and stress. H_a is accepted, and H_0 is rejected. The *MANOVA* output of the *Tests of Between-Subjects Effects* table obtained sig data for emotional expression and stress is 0.030 and 0.008 < 0.05, so there is a significant difference in the dependent variable between the experimental group and the control group, H_a is accepted, and H_0 is rejected.

The emotional expression scale of the research results shows the average value after being given the *treatment* of the control group class is 51.06, and the experimental group is 53.25. Stress shows the average after *treatment* of the control group class 20.41 and the experimental group 17.34. *MANOVA* test showed a multivariate significant difference between the experimental and control groups on both dependent variables simultaneously.

After the *treatment*, the researcher gave the same emotional and stress expression scale as the scale given before *treatment* as a *posttest*. The change in score on the *posttest* results is a measure of the success of the treatment, which can be seen from the significant difference in the hypothesis results. Based on the hypothesis test using *MANOVA* on the experimental and control groups, there is a substantial difference in the expression of emotions and stress between students who are given *expressive writing* guidance techniques (experimental group) and those who are only given group discussions (control group).

This difference can occur due to the proper disclosure of emotions and stress. *Expressive writing* provides an opportunity for students to express emotions. This process can help them recognize, understand, and process emotions that may be pent up (Pennebaker, 2016). Emotional disclosure can reduce the intensity of emotions and increase positive emotions. Writing about emotional experiences can help individuals gain a new perspective and feel more relieved (Bieda, et al., 2019).

Writing about stressful experiences can help students identify the source of their stress and develop more effective coping strategies (Pratama, 2021). This finding is also consistent with previous research by Malida and Hilma (2023), which discussed *how expressive writing* can reduce stress by helping students process ongoing stressful experiences.

Group discussions are aimed at sharing experiences and perspectives. However, they do not provide enough space for individuals to explore themselves and express more sensitive feelings. Although discussions help students express emotions, the main focus is exchanging ideas and information. Discussions do not provide enough space for students to process emotions and stress deeply.

Emotional expression skills can train emotional expression. The subject is asked to write about experiences related to feelings and emotions that are being experienced or have been experienced in the near future (Putri et al., 2023). One alternative in dealing with emotional expression is to write, which triggers a series of deep reactions that occur in individuals, both from within and from outside, which contain certain judgments, resulting in a tendency to act and behave in carrying out activities (Oktavilia & Marahayu, 2023).

Stress is a personal phenomenon and varies between individuals depending on the individual's vulnerability and resilience in the face of stressful pressure (Fink, 2016). Stress can also be said to be a loss of emotional control. Physically, stress is the body's resistance. This is supported by research conducted (Seaward, 2020), which reveals that stress actually improves physical performance and processing skills such as concentration.

Expressive writing can help students process their emotions and stressful experiences, thereby reducing the negative impact of stress on their well-being. *Expressive writing* can reduce stress because when individuals succeed in releasing their negative emotions, such as feelings of sadness, disappointment, and sorrow, into handwriting, the individual can begin to change attitudes, increase creativity, activate memory, improve performance and life satisfaction, and increase immunity to avoid psychosomatics (Anggarawati et al., 2021).

Expressive writing also provides opportunities for students to process and reflect on their emotional experiences, including stressful experiences. Through writing, students can pour out their feelings and thoughts that may be difficult to express verbally. This process can help students understand and accept their emotions, thus reducing the negative impact of stress on their psychological well-being. In other words, *expressive writing* not only increases the expression of positive emotions but also helps students manage and reduce their stress.

The results of this study indicate that the use of *expressive writing* techniques is effective in reducing emotional expression and stress in students. The effectiveness of using this technique was successful in increasing emotional expression and reducing student stress because it was included in the first *treatment* category and had never been tried before by students at school; students followed actively even though sometimes some students disturbed their friends when carrying out this *treatment*

4. Conclusion

The results of MANOVA analysis showed a multivariate significant difference between the experimental group and the control group on both dependent variables simultaneously. So, the expressive writing guidance technique effectively reduces emotional expression and stress in Junior High School. It is recommended that counselor or counselling teachers consider expressive writing as one intervention technique to help students express emotions and stress. Future research can examine

test the effectiveness expressive writing technique with other variable related student problems for example emotion negative, stress academic and self-esteem or mediate the relationship between expressive writing and students' emotional well-being, such as gender, age, or socioeconomic background, so that research can provide a deeper understanding of how and why expressive writing is effective for students.

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