

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITING A DIARY IN IMPROVING THE EMOTIONAL REGULATION IN THE FRESHMAN YEAR

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ABSTRACT

The Effectiveness of writing a diary in improving the emotional regulation in the freshman year. This research started from the fact that they lack of the emotional regulation in the freshman year. This research is a quasi-experimental design using the one group pre-test post-test design. The sample taken was 10 students who had a low emotional regulation. The data were collected by using a scale of emotional regulation. The test results proved the hypothesis that writing a diary was effective in improving the emotional regulation in the freshman year.

Keywords: Emotional Regulation, Diary, Freshman Year.

INTRODUCTION

Emotions are feelings and conditions within a person reflecting certain reactions to the stimulus received. They describe what a person is thinking and feeling, involving conscious expression and experience (King, 2012).

In addition, Wade and Tavis (2008) stated that emotions are also the soul and heart of human experience. If human do not have emotions, then in some ways their life will indeed become easier. They will not worry about test scores, parents who are sick, and disturbed by the injustice that is happening in our environment. Even so, they will not feel sad when friends get into trouble, feel love and be able to laugh when something is funny. Frequently, people feel uncomfortable with their emotions and wish they could be free from the pain caused by feelings of anger, jealousy, shame, guilt, grief and love.

Obviously, emotions often change in humans, making it difficult for a person to adjust because he cannot regulate his emotions properly. For example, someone suddenly cries when laughing with friends in a conversation, due to a condition that makes him remember last night's incident being decided by his girlfriend, and someone suddenly frowns when receiving guests at a party who demands to smile to all people. There are also those who suddenly laugh when nothing is funny and so on (Wade & Tavis, 2008).

In fact, many people cannot regulate their emotions properly. This is caused by ignorance of the right way to channel their emotions. A research conducted by Hidayat (2011) on the emotional regulation of daughters who are addicted to pornography showed that the process of achieving the subject's emotional balance is less successful because the subject expresses these emotions without knowing the right way to channel sexual response so that the behavior of consuming pornography is carried out repeatedly and it is very difficult to control it.

On the other hand, individuals who can regulate their emotions well need a learning process so that the emotions that arise in response to certain situations can be clearly and precisely expressed. An example of someone who is always and good at holding back anger, he will not express his anger at any place. This individual will try to be aware of every emotion he feels and feel comfortable expressing it (Susilaningsih, Saidiyah & Kusumaputri, 2006).

In addition, according to Gross (Lewis, Jones, & Barrett, 2008), emotion regulation is the way individuals influencing the emotions they have when they feel them and how they experience or express these emotions. Reivich and Shatte (Gross, 2006) explained that emotional regulation is the ability to remain calm under pressure. Individuals who have the ability to regulate emotions can control themselves when they are upset and can overcome feelings of anxiety, sadness, or anger so as to speed up solving a problem.

Moreover, Ochsner & Gross (Lewis, Jones, & Barrett, 2008) supported that emotional regulation consists of behavior, cognitive, attention, physiology or strategies to eliminate emotions or changes in emotional expression. This is related to the basic technique of psychoanalytic therapy, namely free association. Free association is a method of recalling past experiences and releasing emotions related to traumatic situations known as catharsis, catharsis encourages individuals to channel pent-up feelings so that individuals can gain new understanding and as self-evaluation (Corey, 2003).

However, there is a significant relationship between cognition and emotion regulation. Our mindset or way of thinking is very influential on emotions, besides that cognitive is greatly influenced by the environment and personality including culture, training and skills possessed and the closeness of loved ones (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2007).

In the theory of developmental psychology, students are in the late adolescent and early adult age groups. A phase that is considered full of various problems and pressures. The various changes they experienced were followed by the many demands they received, causing various problems to arise, one of which was freshman year (Berk, 2012).

In the first year of college, students are required to overcome all the problems and conflicts they experience and make adjustments to the new environment. The failure of students to overcome problems and make adjustments to stressful events will trigger new problems for students (Berk, 2012).

According to Gunarsa (Gunarsah & Gunarsah, 2001), students have their own challenges in life, when individuals enter the world of college, individuals face various changes, ranging from changes due to differences in the nature of high school and university education, differences in social relations, selection of fields studies or majors, and economic problems. Besides, new students will also face pressure due to the acculturation process with the new culture where they study. Students must face cultural changes, lifestyle changes, and environmental changes. This triggers first year students to have low emotional regulation so that they are required to be able to handle it properly so that the continuity of education also goes well.

Furthermore, the learning process and atmosphere in tertiary institutions are different from those in secondary schools so that they are required to be able to adapt to the roles and tasks that they have to carry out as students. Higher education learning activities are carried out based on the semester credit system (SKS). The semester credit system is an education delivery system using semester credit unit (SKS) to express student study load, lecturer workload,

learning experience and program implementation burden. This Semester Credit System provides an opportunity for students to determine courses that suit their interests, talents, and abilities, and active students can complete the specified study program in the shortest possible time (Universitas Negeri Padang, 2011). Thus, this system requires a great responsibility on students in determining courses and the number of credits to be taken. In high school, it is different, where the study load, subjects and student study period have been determined, they just have to live with it. Obstacles in completing studies can be caused by the inability of students to adjust themselves (Universitas Negeri Padang, 2011).

The researchers conducted the initial interviews on June 19th, 2015 with three first-year students of the Informatics Management Study Program domicile outside Politeknik Negeri Padang, Tanah Datar Campus. The subject with the initials ER admitted that it was difficult for him to explain the emotions he was feeling when he was having problems with his classmates. He would cry, but he could not say that he was crying because he was sad, annoyed or angry and if he failed, he always doubted his abilities, such as he has studied but still getting a low score on the exam so he did not want to study again. Then, the subject with the initials FM, found it difficult to concentrate in lectures when he was angry, so he would leave class. He would also not work on lecture assignments when there were problems. Next, the subject with the initials EDC would leave people who have disappointed him and really hated that person and when he was angry, he often did things he later regretted like smashing his cellphone and then regretting it. This can be helped with writing therapy.

The results of the research by Susilowati & Hasanat (2011) showed that emotional writing therapy can make a person develop his thoughts related to the events that are experienced. By writing, the subject can develop thoughts to accept the existing situation, focusing on things that are more positive. Writing experiences also encourages the subject to gain an understanding or insight, develops motivation, and encourages a sense of optimism within oneself by developing hopes and beliefs.

Writing is a cathartic medium (Djibran, 2008). Catharsis encourages individuals to channel their pent-up feelings so that individuals can gain new understanding and self-evaluation (Corey, 2003). Catharsis is also a relief for the soul, when a writer succeeds in completing his writing (Wibisono, 2007). *Depdikbud* (Djuanda, 2008) suggests that writing is making letters (numbers, etc.) with a pen, generating thoughts and feelings (such as composing, making letters) with writing, composing in magazines, composing romances (stories, writing letters). Writing is an individual creative process that is transferred into written symbols (Semi, 2007).

The results of a study conducted by Putra (2010) stated that there is an effect of diary writing on the subjective well-being of adolescent victims of divorce. Writing diaries in this study can improve the mood of adolescent divorce victims who have low subjective well-being so that the adolescent's mood returns to be stable.

Writing a diary means writing down daily activities, a diary is greatly influenced by the character and personality of the writer. A diary is highly confidential. Through a diary one can reminisce and recall events or plans that have passed, as one's life history, as well as being a motivation for a better life and achieving goals. When a person cannot tell what happened to him to other people, then he tells his personal notes. Because every desire of the heart wants to be expressed immediately, if someone has written what is in his heart, then his emotions have been released and he feels stable again (Kawaura, Kawakami, & Yamashita, 1998).

METHODS

Types of Research

This type of research is an experimental study. The experiment was conducted to see the effectiveness of writing a diary in improving the emotional regulation in the freshman year. This research is a quasi-experimental study because there are still many secondary variables that cannot be controlled.

Research Design

The design in this study was: one group pretest-posttest design, namely the measurement of the dependent variable was carried out twice: before and after the manipulation was given by using the same measuring instruments. (Seniati, Yulianto & Setiadi, 2005).

Population and Sample

The population in this study were the first-year students of the Informatics Management Study Program domicile outside Politeknik Negeri Padang, Tanah Datar Campus. The sample in this study was 10 students chosen by using the purposive sampling technique, with the criteria of subjects having low emotional regulation.

Measuring Instruments

Collecting data in this study used an emotion regulation scale which was compiled based on aspects of Gross' emotion regulation. Aspects of emotion regulation are monitoring emotions, evaluating emotions and modifying emotions.

Data Analysis Method

The data obtained in the study were analyzed by using the non-parametric statistical analysis, namely the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, using SPSS version 16.0 for Windows. The score used as a calculation was the gain score, which was the difference between the posttest and pretest scores.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Subject data obtained after processing the results of the pretest and posttest can be seen in Table 1 below.

No.	Subjects	Pretest	Category	Posttest	Category	Gain score
1.	DA	117	Low	120	Medium	+3
2.	DEP	115	Low	130	Medium	+15
3.	SWN	113	Low	119	Medium	+5
4.	EDC	115	Low	125	Medium	+10
5.	A	113	Low	135	Medium	+22
6.	ER	114	Low	136	Medium	+22
7.	AR	109	Low	130	Medium	+21
8.	FM	115	Low	129	Medium	+14
9.	RF	113	Low	136	Medium	+23
10.	IA	117	Low	125	Medium	+8

Descriptively, the difference in the subject's mean value at the pretest = 114.1 and the posttest = 128.5 so that the difference in the mean gain score obtained 14.4. The comparison of the mean value at pretest and posttest above can be more clearly seen in the image below:



Figure 1. Graph of Mean Scores at Pretest and Posttest

Based on the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test statistic, the Asymp value can be obtained. Sig. (2-tailed) or p of 0.005 and the hypothesis can be accepted. The term of decision making is if $p \leq 0.05$ then the hypothesis is accepted. The conclusion is that there is an effect of writing a diary on the emotional regulation in the freshman year for Informatics Management students domicile outside Politeknik Negeri Padang, Tanah Datar Campus.

DISCUSSION

The analysis above shows that writing a diary was effective in improving the emotional regulation in the freshman year. This is reinforced by the research conducted by Susilowati & Hasanat (2011) that emotional writing therapy can make a person develop his thoughts related to the events experienced. By writing, the subject can develop thoughts to accept the existing situation, focusing on things that are more positive. Writing experiences also encourages the subject to gain an understanding or insight, develops motivation, and encourages a sense of optimism within oneself by developing hopes and beliefs.

Besides that, everyone needs other people to share the experiences they feel and what they think, but not everyone can tell them to other people and sometimes there is no right person to share. Writing is an activity of sharing when our writings are read by others, by writing anger or fear, sadness and other painful feelings can be released, so that writing makes oneself more alive and colorful, because after writing a person feels that his life is meaningful again and feels relieved (Djibran, 2008). This is related to one of the psychoanalytic therapy techniques called catharsis, catharsis encourages individuals to channel pent-up feelings so that individuals can gain new understanding and self-evaluation (Corey, 2003). Therefore, writing a diary can improve emotion regulation.

In terms of aspects of emotion regulation, the results of the study showed that there was an increase in scores from the pretest to the posttest, where the mean difference from the aspects of monitoring and evaluating emotions was the same. This was because first year students can properly realize and understand the entire emotional process that occurs within them and can manage and balance the emotions they experience. While in the aspect of modifying emotions there was a higher mean difference. This was because students' abilities to modify emotions and motivate themselves are much better.

Clearly, monitoring emotions is an individual's ability to realize and understand the entire process that occurs and the background of feelings and actions taken. Because the diary is a source of information (what, who, and where), and a means of expressing thoughts and feelings

(Wahono, Rusmiyanto, Priyana, etc. 2009). By writing students can find themselves. When someone writes, he will know who he is, what happened, what he likes and dislikes, as well as opinions about other people and their environment (Djibran, 2008).

In addition, evaluating emotions is an individual's ability to manage and balance the emotions experienced and to be able to think rationally because writing is direct communication with oneself, contained in unfiltered words. This makes us listen and speak for ourselves and appreciate and know what are saying (Djibran, 2008).

Moreover, emotional modification is an individual's ability to change emotions so that they are able to motivate themselves. This is because the diary records, records, and perpetuates experiences, feelings and thoughts that are useful, it can be used as a guide in the future (Ministry of National Education, 2003 & Kusrini, 2008) so that individuals can motivate themselves to achieve dreams and shape themselves to be more enthusiastic (Djibran, 2008).

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

Based on the findings and hypothesis testing regarding the effectiveness of writing a diary on the emotional regulation in the freshman year, it can be concluded that writing a diary was effective in improving the emotional regulation in the freshman year. The findings were reinforced by descriptive analysis of the mean rank gain score when the pretest and posttest increased, the Wilcoxon hypothesis test obtained a p value of 0.005 and H_0 was rejected. It means that writing a diary was not effective in increasing the emotional regulation in the freshman year in which the term of decision making is when $p \leq 0.05$.

Suggestions

Based on the findings there are several suggestions that can be given by the researchers, including: *first*, for the research subjects to continue writing diaries every day, make diaries as a reference in the future and motivate themselves and form themselves to be more enthusiastic. *Second*, for the individuals who cannot express their feelings and thoughts to others. They can express them through writing a diary. Diary writing should be done as often and routinely as possible when there are confusing feelings and thoughts. *Third*, for the future research, if they want to do research with the same theme, it should be done in two groups (the control group and the experimental group) so that the effect of writing diaries can really be seen. Then, the number of subjects who meet the criteria is increased so that internal validity will be better, and conduct further research on secondary variables that cannot be controlled by researchers. If still using the design of one group, it is better to use a time series design type where the measurements are carried out repeatedly so that there is constant interaction effect, namely the effect of the interaction between the researchers and the research subject.

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