

Empowering traumatized students: the effectiveness of compassion training in overcoming the impact of bullying

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Abstract

The prevalence of bullying in schools is a widespread issue that negatively impacts the psychosocial, self-esteem, and emotional well-being of its victim. Therefore, it is imperative to enhance the self-functioning of students. Compassion training is one of the approaches that can help individuals to survive, understand and obtain the positivity in difficult situations. This study employed a quantitative approach with a quasi-experimental study design to obtain 50 high-school students in Pringsewu District, Lampung Province, Indonesia. Furthermore, data collection was conducted using a self-function scale developed based on Rogers' theory. The data were analyzed using the independent t-test technique to evaluate the feasibility of changing behaviour by comparing conditions. The compassion training model is proven to increase the fully functioning of students that are victims of bullying. This can be seen from the increasing indicators of their self-assessment functioning. Meanwhile, fully functioning individuals instinctively help others achieve their need for positivity by expressing genuine concern through harmonious relationships. These individuals cultivate an open-minded attitude, maintain a strong sense of purpose, and establish trust in themselves and others.

Keywords: Fully functioning, compassion training, bullying

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Introduction

The prevalence of bullying behaviour frequently arises in educational institutions among students. It is defined as a persistent pattern of behaviour that causes negative effects on individuals or groups. Furthermore, it can manifest through physical (assault), verbal (ridicule, intimidation, harassment), and social (dissemination of false information, ostracism, breach of privacy) means (Hart Barnett et al., 2019). Individuals or organizations unable to defend themselves are the targets of bullying (Olweus, 2013).

Bullying of children and adolescents is a problem that has received national and international attention (Nickerson, 2019). It has become a complex social situation common in various environments (Gosling, 2019), including schools (Yıldırım et al., 2014) and workplaces (Mitchell, 2019). Most bullying occurs in areas where adults are absent, such as on school grounds or hallways during recess (Fekkes, Pijpers and Verloove-Vanhorick, 2005). The effects of bullying on its victims can be devastating and have a lasting impact on their psychosocial, self-esteem, and emotional well-being (Macaulay et al., 2020). Therefore, bullying in the school environment should be addressed effectively (Espelage and Hong, 2017). The perpetuation can result in negative consequences, such as social, emotional, and psychological difficulties. For victims, it can trigger depression, anxiety, and suicide. There is growing evidence linking bullying with antisocial behaviour and psychiatric disorders (Felipe et al., 2011). As a result, it is a significant concern for parents, teachers, psychologists, and health professionals worldwide, particularly in educational settings (Olweus, 2013).

Adolescents, who undergo biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes (Santrock, 2003), are at a critical stage in their development. During this phase, they can solve problems and decide their future. This is a logical thinking stage, enabling them to systematically address issues (Jaffee and D’Zurilla, 2009). Therefore, the provision of the necessary skills to resolve problems and maintain good relationships with others is important (Bluckert, 2014). Adolescence is characterized by instability in self-identity, which manifests as emotional volatility stemming from irrational thoughts. Alhadi et al. (2018) studied aggressive behaviour among Junior High School students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and found that their aggressiveness was very high. Similarly, Nanda, Saputra and Handaka (2018) reported that 5% of Yogyakarta City Vocational School students displayed very high levels of aggressive behaviour, and 26% were in the high category. The findings indicate that the tendency is comparable between male and female students (Saputra, Hanifah and Widagdo, 2017).

There is a correlation between self-control variables and juvenile delinquency behaviour, which is bridged by peer conformity. Furthermore, parents and teachers also have a significant role in forming a sense of peace among students (Chapple, 2005).

Emotional conditions within the family can influence adolescent behaviour. Meanwhile, the affection adolescents receive from their parents during childhood can alter their feelings (Israel, Hasenfratz and Knafo-Noam, 2015). Good emotions will form a peaceful character in the child. This necessitates the self-functioning of students to exhibit positive behaviour (Ryff, 1995). Therefore, a fully functioning idea is essential to an individual’s data-generating welfare.

Fully functioning individuals deserve others’ affection and can care sincerely. The need for positivity is achieved by forming successful interpersonal relationships and showing unconditional positive concern for others. Additionally, they respond spontaneously to their experiences and think of happiness, not as a fixed utopia but as an ever-changing journey (Rogers, 1961). The concept of fully functional proposed by Rogers is viewed differently by various experts. Ewen defined self-function as an individual who is psychologically healthy and optimal (Ewen, 2014). According to Engler, a fully functioning individual is expected to operate optimally (Engler, 2013).

Compassion training is one of the approaches that can help individuals to survive, understand and obtain the positivity in difficult situations. Individuals with good self-compassion will show greater psychological health to strengthen themselves from pain (Wood et al., 1990) and feelings of failure or isolation (Nolen-Hoeksema, 1991). It can result in less self-depression, anxiety, neurotic perfectionism, and greater life satisfaction. Self-compassion can make individuals prevent themselves from experiencing problems. It raises proactive behaviour to maintain self-esteem, such as eating healthy food. Self-esteem develops when actions reflect the authenticity of the individual (Deci and Ryan, 1995). Self-compassion is the willingness to be touched and open to one’s awareness when experiencing suffering.

Method

Study Design

This study uses a quantitative approach through statistical methods to process data. The type of study design used is quasi-experimental to control the variables from situations (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). The method was conducted to obtain the significance of group differences. The quantitative approach is intended to determine the difference between before and after treatment. Furthermore, the quasi-experimental design was the “pretest-posttest one group design.” This experimental design is conducted with a pre-test and post-test before and after treatment.

Data Collection

Data for a study was collected using a self-functioning scale developed based on Roger’s theory. The instrument consists of 40 assessment questions that assess five sub-indicators: openness to experience, the meaning of life, belief in self-organization, and creativity. The analysis was conducted using the Rasch Model approach and the Winsteps program, which pays attention to both the items and the respondents and calculates the correlation magnitude.

Subject of Study

The study population was High School students in Pringsewu District, Lampung Province, Indonesia. Meanwhile, purposive sampling was used to obtain samples according to the problem and the data collection type. In this study, 50 people were used as subjects.

Data Analysis Technique

The results from the study data were tested for homogeneity and normality. The feasibility is tested using an independent t-test technique after meeting the prerequisites. This is intended to assess the feasibility of the model in changing behaviour by comparing conditions.

Results and Discussion

Test Reliability and Estimation Validity through Principal Component Analysis

The analysis was carried out in three stages, namely, considering each item's reliability, sample reliability, and interaction between both on the fully-functioning instrument.

Table 1. Test Reliability Winsteps

Estimation	Measure
Items reliability	0,85
Person reliability	0,96
Cronbach alpha (KR-20) person raw score "test" reliability	0,87

Unidirectionality is a principle that assures the proper functioning of an instrument and its ability to measure the intended parameters accurately. This modelling was developed based on principal component analysis.

Table 2. Standardized Residual Variance In Winsteps Program

	Empirical		Modelled	
Total raw variance in observations	53.1	100.0%		100.0%
Raw variance explained by measures	13.1	24.6%		26.9%
Raw variance explained by persons	2.5	4.6%		5%
Raw variance explained by items	10.6	20.0%		21.8%
Raw unexplained variance (total)	40.0	75.4%	100.0%	73.1%

The natural variance data shows a result of 26.9%, demonstrating that the minimum requirement of 20% is satisfied. The importance of ensuring unidimensionality in instruments cannot be overemphasized, as it evaluates the ability to measure the intended parameters accurately.

Test for Normality and Homogeneity of Data

Table 3. Normality of Data Before Treatment

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Results_Before_Treatments	.116	50	.013

From the results of these data stating that the value of p-value (sig.) < 0.05 with a significant value of $0.013 < 0.005$, the data taken from the population before the treatment is normally distributed.

Table 4. Normality of Data After Treatment

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Results_after Treatment	.098	50	.047

Based on the table data results, where the p-value (sig.) < 0.05 with a significant value of $0.047 < 0.005$, it is concluded that the data taken from the population after treatment are also normally distributed.

Table 5. Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Based on Mean	.252	1	.567

Based on the above data, the value of sig. Leven's test for equality of variance for the experimental group is 0.567, where the p-value (sig.) < 0.05 with a significant value of $0.567 < 0.005$, it is concluded that the variance in each data group is homogeneous.

Results of Data Analysis

The compassion training model improves the self-functioning of students who experience bullying trauma, and the data processing is presented below in Table 6.

Table 6 shows the t-count of 4,734 with the level of a sign. (2-tailed)=0,000 with df=50, hence, the t-table value=1,676 at the significance level ($\alpha=0.05$). The compassion training model is proven to increase the fully functioning of students that are victims of bullying.

Table 6. Test Group Differences

Class	Mean	Std. Deviation	t- count	t-table	Sig. (2-tailed)	Description
Before	141,04	13.533	4,734	1, 676	0,000	Significant
After	151,17	15.614				

Bullying is a repeated pattern of aggressive behaviour with an imbalance of power, intending to intimidate or harm the victim (Rodkin and Fischer, 2012; Olweus, 1995). Furthermore, victims cannot effectively defend themselves due to the power dynamic involved in bullying (Coloroso, 2007). They can experience a range of negative consequences, including physical harm, depression, difficulties concentrating in school, and social withdrawal. They may turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as smoking, alcohol consumption, skipping school, or seeking revenge.

Bullying affects individuals of all ages and genders who are perceived to be weak, shy, introverted, smart, or different in some way (Shafer and Silverman, 2013). A person can be considered a victim of bullying when they experience negative actions such as intentional harm, physical or verbal discomfort, or repeated patterns of mistreatment (Shafer and Silverman, 2013). Trivial forms of ridicule and teasing can damage a child and are considered forms of bullying. The long-lasting effects can impact a child's life in all aspects, including school, home, and community.

Meanwhile, perpetrators are strong, dominant, and assertive, as well as show aggressive behaviour towards parents, teachers, and other adults. In addition, most bullies lack adult supervision at home, abuse substances, cheat on tests, and take weapons to school (Olweus, 1995).

Self-compassion is a concept rooted in Eastern philosophy and studied in the Western world. It refers to treating oneself with kindness and understanding, similar to the empathy felt towards others in difficult circumstances (Neff, 2003). Furthermore, Eastern philosophy posits that true compassion for others cannot be achieved without self-compassion.

Self-compassion is closely related to the broader definition of compassion, which involves being moved by others' suffering and open to their difficulties (Wispé, 1991). It also entails avoiding the judgment of others and recognizing that human error is a natural part of life. By Rogers, individuals with a positive self-image and high self-esteem can attain a "fully functioning" state. This is similar to Maslow's concept of self-actualization. Individuals in this state are motivated by internal processes rather than external validation, with unity between self-actualizing and actualizing tendencies. They are open to experiences, accept setbacks, and view mistakes objectively as opportunities for growth (Elis and Abrams, 2009).

Carl Rogers was a pioneer in scientifically studying personal growth and realizing the benefits of life. It was stated that everyone has an innate drive towards self-improvement and discovering their true selves, increasing positive emotions. Fully functioning individuals realize and utilize their talents to the fullest (Friedman and Schustack, 1999).

Humanistic personality psychologists have devoted a great deal of energy to explaining the etiology of love. The theory posits that individuals who attain self-actualization and become their best selves are capable of experiencing genuine love. Emphasis is placed on the notion that self-acceptance and self-love are prerequisites to offering authentic love to others. For instance, Carl Rogers contended that children who develop self-acceptance would grow into fully functioning individuals with the capacity for genuine love towards others (Friedman and Schustack, 1999).

Rogers held a positive outlook on human personality, distinct from Freud's pessimistic view. Individuals could exert conscious control over their lives provided their personality pathology is not excessively severe (Elis and Abrams, 2009). Therefore, a fully functioning individual would be liked by most people and tend to express a deep and genuine concern for others. This individual instinctively helps others achieve their need for positivity by expressing genuine concern through congruent relationships. Rogers

viewed this concept as an ongoing process of growth rather than a state of existence, which differed from Maslow's conception of the fully actualized individual (Elis and Abrams, 2009).

Conclusion

Compass Training model has been conclusively demonstrated to enhance the overall functioning of students victimized by bullying. Self-compassion has been found to promote greater psychological health and resilience, enabling individuals to effectively deal with feelings of pain, failure, and isolation. Fully functioning individuals are widely respected and known for their genuine concern for the well-being of others, actively fostering positivity through supportive relationships.

The process of becoming a fully functioning individual is a continual journey of personal growth and development. As a result, individuals who have achieved a degree of well-adjustment are consistently searching for ways to further their growth and improvement. A fully functioning individual is widely recognized by the presence of "exemplary emotional health," an openness to experiences, a well-defined sense of purpose, and a robust sense of self-belief, along with trust in others.

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