



Psychoeducational Intervention To Enhance Emotional Regulation Skills Among High School Students Facing University Entrance Examinations

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Info Article Received : 02 Mei 2026 Revised: 02 Juni 2026 Accepted: 01 Juli 2026 Publication: 31 Juli 2026	Abstract: <i>Grade XII students often experience emotional pressure when preparing for university entrance examinations, which may trigger anxiety, negative thoughts, and difficulties in managing emotions. This community service program aimed to improve students' knowledge and emotion regulation skills through psychoeducation based on creative-expressive activities. A pre-experimental method with a one-group pre-test-post-test design was employed involving 10 Grade XII students in District X, Central Kalimantan. The program was conducted in four sessions combining material delivery, discussion, emotional reflection, and creative activities. The results showed a significant improvement in students' knowledge and emotion regulation skills after participating in the psychoeducation program. These findings indicate that psychoeducation based on creative-expressive activities has the potential to serve as an effective preventive intervention to help students regulate their emotions more adaptively when facing the pressures and demands of university entrance examination preparation, while also strengthening their psychological readiness to undergo the challenging higher education selection process.</i>
Keywords: Emotion Regulation, High School Students, Psychoeducation, University Entrance Examinations. Kata Kunci: Psikoedukasi, Regulasi Emosi, Siswa Sma, Ujian Masuk Perguruan Tinggi	Abstrak: Siswa kelas XII sering menghadapi tekanan emosional ketika mempersiapkan ujian masuk perguruan tinggi, yang dapat memicu kecemasan, pikiran negatif, dan kesulitan mengelola emosi. Kegiatan pengabdian ini bertujuan meningkatkan pengetahuan dan keterampilan regulasi emosi siswa melalui psikoedukasi berbasis aktivitas kreatif-ekspresif. Metode yang digunakan adalah pre-eksperimental dengan desain one-group pre-test-post-test pada 10 siswa kelas XII di Kabupaten X, Kalimantan Tengah. Program dilaksanakan dalam empat sesi yang memadukan penyampaian materi, diskusi, refleksi emosi, dan aktivitas kreatif. Hasil kegiatan menunjukkan adanya peningkatan yang signifikan pada aspek pengetahuan dan keterampilan regulasi emosi setelah siswa mengikuti psikoedukasi. Temuan tersebut menunjukkan bahwa psikoedukasi berbasis aktivitas kreatif-ekspresif berpotensi menjadi alternatif intervensi preventif yang efektif untuk membantu siswa mengelola emosi secara lebih adaptif dalam menghadapi tekanan dan tuntutan selama persiapan ujian masuk perguruan tinggi, sekaligus memperkuat kesiapan psikologis mereka dalam menjalani proses seleksi pendidikan tinggi yang penuh tantangan akademik.
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INTRODUCTION

The university admission process often generates considerable psychological pressure among high school students. Anxiety related to university entrance selection is commonly influenced by fear of failure, academic demands, social expectations, and uncertainty about the future, which may lead to excessive worry, sleep disturbances, emotional exhaustion, decreased self-confidence, and feelings of inferiority when competing with peers (Hadi & Abidin, 2025; Romdon & Miharja, 2025; Syahid & Darmawanti, 2025). An analysis involving 377 high school students conducted by Suprianto et al. (2025) found that 266 students (70%) experienced a moderate level of fear of failure, while 47 students (12.4%) were categorized as having a high level of fear of failure.

The researchers also conducted a preliminary assessment involving ten twelfth-grade students from Senior High School X in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The findings indicated that all participants expressed concerns regarding their plans to pursue higher education. These concerns primarily emerged after they failed to gain admission through the National Selection Based on Achievement (SNBP), which had previously been regarded as one of the most promising pathways to public universities. Failure in the SNBP process led many students to experience disappointment, sadness, regret, and doubts regarding their academic abilities. Several students reported persistent worries about not being accepted into their desired universities. Students further reported that their previous failure in the SNBP increased their anxiety regarding the National Selection Based on Test (SNBT). They perceived the pressure associated with SNBT as substantially greater because it represented one of the remaining opportunities to secure admission to a public university. Participants described various negative thoughts, including fears of obtaining insufficient scores and concerns about competing with other applicants whom they perceived as more capable. Some students also reported frequently comparing themselves with peers who had successfully gained admission through SNBP, resulting in diminished self-confidence and feelings of inadequacy.

In addition, students expressed concerns regarding the higher costs associated with independent admission pathways, intense competition, and the possibility of postponing higher education if all admission attempts proved unsuccessful. Some participants reported repeatedly imagining failure scenarios, such as not being admitted to any university, disappointing their parents, or falling behind their peers. Students also described engaging in negative self-evaluations, perceiving themselves as less intelligent,

insufficiently competent, or incapable of achieving their goals. The participants acknowledged difficulties in managing their emotions while preparing for university entrance examinations. These difficulties were reflected in feelings of anxiety, concentration problems, rapid mood fluctuations, and a tendency to ruminate on negative possibilities. Students reported uncertainty regarding how to manage their negative emotions effectively and expressed a need for adaptive emotional regulation skills that would allow them to maintain academic focus, sustain motivation, and accept unpleasant emotions as a natural part of goal pursuit rather than avoiding or becoming overwhelmed by them. These findings highlight the importance of preventive efforts and interventions aimed at helping adolescents manage negative emotions more adaptively.

Berking and Whitley (2014) explained that deficits in emotion regulation are present across nearly all mental disorders, including depression. Consistent with this perspective, difficulties in emotion regulation have been associated with increased vulnerability to stress, anxiety, and depression (Aldao et al., 2010; Morrish et al., 2018). Research by Houck et al. (2016) demonstrated that improvements in emotion regulation through intervention were associated with reductions in adolescent risk-taking behaviors. The ability to manage negative emotions adaptively not only helps individuals cope with unpleasant emotional experiences but also serves as an important protective factor in preventing and reducing mental health problems (Berking & Whitley, 2014). According to Berking and Whitley (2014), emotion regulation encompasses a range of competencies that enable individuals to recognize, understand, accept, and manage emotional experiences in ways that support personal goals and psychological well-being. This perspective is consistent with Thompson's (1994) view that emotion regulation involves internal and external mechanisms through which emotional responses are monitored, evaluated, and adjusted over time.

Based on a review of existing theories of emotion regulation, Berking and colleagues developed the Adaptive Coping with Emotions (ACE) Model. Within this framework, adaptive emotion regulation is conceptualized as the situational interaction of seven emotion regulation skills that function together. Healthy emotion regulation involves not only the ability to change emotions but also the capacity to understand, accept, and effectively confront emotional experiences (Berking & Whitley, 2014). According to Berking and Whitley (2014), these skills include: (1) awareness, the ability to consciously recognize one's emotions; (2) identifying and labeling emotions, the ability to accurately recognize and label emotional experiences; (3) understanding

emotions, the ability to identify factors that trigger and maintain emotions; (4) modification, the ability to adaptively alter the quality, intensity, or duration of emotions through effective strategies; (5) acceptance and tolerance, the ability to accept and tolerate negative emotions when they cannot be changed; (6) readiness to confront, the willingness to face emotionally challenging situations in pursuit of meaningful goals; and (7) effective self-support, the ability to provide oneself with support during emotionally stressful situations.

During adolescence, emotion regulation abilities do not always develop optimally. Ongoing cognitive and emotional development often makes it difficult for adolescents to recognize and understand their emotional experiences (Steinberg, 2014; Harter, 2012). Consequently, they may struggle to manage emotional responses effectively. Such difficulties can lead to the suppression or maladaptive expression of negative emotions, thereby increasing the risk of psychological problems (Kring & Sloan, 2010; Morrish et al., 2018). Therefore, interventions are needed to help adolescents develop adaptive emotion regulation skills. Various interventions have been developed to enhance emotion regulation among adolescents. Direct emotion regulation training has been shown to improve the use of adaptive emotion regulation strategies (Houck et al., 2016). Mindfulness-based approaches, such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, have also demonstrated effectiveness in increasing emotional awareness (Shahidi et al., 2017). Psychoeducation represents another promising approach for improving knowledge related to emotion regulation (Syafina & Purnomosidi, 2025). In community settings, psychoeducation is regarded as a low-cost, accessible, and beneficial preventive intervention suitable for diverse age groups and backgrounds (van Daele et al., 2011). Psychoeducational programs may help reduce stress by enhancing knowledge and coping skills that support prevention and early intervention efforts (Weiss et al., 2024).

Psychoeducation combines cognitive learning with experiential activities. As a result, it emphasizes not only the provision of information but also the development of practical skills that can be applied in everyday life. Through this approach, psychoeducation contributes to both conceptual understanding and the development of personal and social competencies that support academic success and adaptive functioning (Supratiknya, 2011). One emotion regulation framework that can serve as the basis for psychoeducational interventions is Affect Regulation Training (ART), which was specifically designed to enhance emotion regulation competence through seven core skills: muscular relaxation, breathing relaxation, nonjudgmental awareness, acceptance

and tolerance of emotions, compassionate self-support, emotional analysis, and emotion modification. Mastery of these skills enables individuals to recognize, accept, understand, and manage emotions more adaptively, thereby reducing the negative impact of emotions and enhancing psychological well-being (Berking & Whitley, 2014).

In the present study, a creativity-based approach was incorporated as a medium for emotional expression to help adolescents better understand and manage their emotional experiences. Creative activities involve processes of creating or self-expression, such as drawing, coloring, writing, listening to music, or producing other forms of artwork. These activities provide individuals with safe and constructive ways to express emotions that may be difficult to verbalize (Malchiodi, 2012). Previous research has shown that creative activities support emotion regulation through mechanisms such as distraction, cognitive reappraisal, and enhanced self-understanding (Fancourt et al., 2019). From the perspective of the ACE model (Berking & Whitley, 2014), creative activities function as adaptive coping strategies that facilitate constructive engagement with emotional experiences. Similarly, within the ART framework, creative activities may support multiple emotion regulation skills, including nonjudgmental emotional awareness, acceptance and tolerance, emotional analysis, and the modification of negative emotional states into more adaptive responses.

The target population of this psychoeducational program consists of high school students aged 15–18 years, who are in the developmental stage of adolescence. According to Berk (2018), adolescence spans approximately from ages 11 to 18. This period is often described as a phase of “storm and stress,” characterized by emotional fluctuations, conflicts, and mood changes (Santrock, 2012). Adolescents face various sources of pressure during this stage, including academic demands, peer relationship challenges, family conflicts, and uncertainty about the future (Berk, 2018). This perspective is consistent with Bronfenbrenner’s (1979, 1994) Ecological Systems Theory, which emphasizes that stressors may arise from multiple layers of the surrounding environment. Nevertheless, individuals are not passive recipients of these pressures; rather, they actively learn and develop strategies to cope with them. Therefore, this psychoeducational program focuses on twelfth-grade students to help them understand and apply emotion regulation skills in their daily lives. As such, the intervention serves as a preventive effort to reduce the risk of psychological distress developing into more serious mental health concerns. This study aims to develop a creative-expressive psychoeducational program and evaluate its effectiveness in

enhancing adaptive emotion regulation skills among twelfth-grade high school students preparing for university entrance examinations. The intervention is expected to improve students’ knowledge of emotion regulation and their ability to apply these skills independently. Furthermore, this study contributes to the development of creative psychoeducational interventions in schools, expands the literature on the role of creative-expressive activities in adolescent emotion regulation, and offers a practical and accessible preventive approach for supporting adolescent psychological well-being.

METHOD

Research Design

The present study adopted a pre-experimental approach utilizing a one-group pretest–posttest design. Participants completed an initial assessment prior to the psychoeducational program and a follow-up assessment after the intervention. This procedure enabled the researchers to evaluate changes in participants’ emotion regulation knowledge and skills following program implementation. A pre-experimental design focuses on observing changes within a single group of participants and does not include a separate comparison or control group (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In a one-group pretest–posttest design, measurements are collected before and after an intervention, allowing researchers to examine potential changes associated with the implemented program (Creswell, 2009).

Research Participants

The participants in this study were 10 twelfth-grade high school students from District X, Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, aged between 15 and 18 years. The demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants (N = 10)

Characteristic	Frequency	Percentage
Male	5	50%
Female	5	50%
Age (Years)		
17	3	30%
18	7	70%

The sample consisted of an equal proportion of male and female students, with five participants in each group. Regarding age distribution, three participants (30%) were 17 years old, while seven participants (70%) were 18 years old.

Research Instruments

1. Interviews and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). The study employed semi-structured interviews, in which the interviewer prepared a set of guiding questions while maintaining flexibility to explore participants' responses in greater depth and adapt to different respondents (Stewart & Cash, 2012). Interviews were conducted with teachers as part of the needs assessment process to obtain information regarding students' mental health conditions, common psychological problems, as well as risk and protective factors influencing students' psychological well-being. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) are commonly used to explore participants' perspectives, experiences, and opinions regarding a particular topic within an interactive group setting (Krueger & Casey, 2015). In the present study, FGDs were conducted with ten twelfth-grade students to gain a deeper understanding of their psychological experiences, perceived challenges, coping strategies, and mental health support needs within the school environment. The findings from the FGDs were used to identify community needs and to determine the most appropriate intervention program.
2. Observation. The observation data were recorded qualitatively using anecdotal records. This method does not require a predetermined observation schedule and can be conducted whenever significant behaviors emerge, with observations recorded as soon as possible after the event occurs (Ni'matuzahroh & Prasetyaningrum, 2018). Observations of twelfth-grade students were conducted to obtain information regarding their behavior, social interactions, participation in learning activities, and general conditions related to mental health within the school setting. In addition, indirect observation was carried out through a self-monitoring worksheet based on the seven adaptive emotion regulation skills proposed in the Adaptive Coping with Emotions (ACE) Model developed by Berking and Whitley (2014). The worksheet required students to reflect on the emotion regulation skills they had used during the week prior to completing the self-monitoring form. This procedure was intended to assess students' baseline emotion regulation skills before participating in the psychoeducational program.
3. Evaluation Measures. The evaluation process consisted of pre-test and post-test assessments measuring two aspects: knowledge and skills. The knowledge component was assessed using a 15-item multiple-choice test developed from the psychoeducational module. Ten items measured knowledge of emotions and adaptive emotion regulation concepts, while the remaining five items assessed participants'

understanding of creative-expressive activities that can be utilized as adaptive emotion regulation strategies. A group interview was conducted during a follow-up session three days after the psychoeducational intervention to gather participants' feedback and evaluate their understanding of the material. To assess the skills component, a self-monitoring worksheet was employed. The worksheet consisted of seven indicators representing the seven adaptive emotion regulation skills described by Berking and Whitley (2014): awareness, identification and labeling of emotions, understanding emotions, emotion modification, acceptance and tolerance, readiness to confront, and effective self-support.

Procedure and Data Analysis

The study was conducted in three stages: preparation, implementation, and evaluation. During the preparation stage, permission was first obtained from the school to conduct a needs assessment and implement the psychoeducational program. The needs assessment involved teachers and ten twelfth-grade students as initial participants. Based on the assessment findings, a need to enhance students' knowledge and skills related to emotion regulation was identified. Subsequently, the researchers developed a creative-expressive psychoeducational intervention tailored to the characteristics and needs of the students. During this stage, the researchers also prepared the psychoeducational materials, media, and module that would be used throughout the intervention. The implementation stage involved the delivery of the psychoeducational program through a series of sessions designed to enhance participants' understanding and application of adaptive emotion regulation skills. The intervention integrated psychoeducational content with creative-expressive activities aimed at facilitating emotional awareness, emotional expression, and the development of adaptive emotion regulation strategies.

The evaluation stage was conducted using a one-group pre-test–post-test design. Participants completed pre-test assessments before the intervention and post-test assessments after the intervention to evaluate changes in their knowledge and skills related to adaptive emotion regulation. In addition, a self-monitoring worksheet was administered to assess participants' application of emotion regulation skills in their daily lives following the psychoeducational program. A follow-up group interview was also conducted three days after the intervention to obtain participants' feedback and evaluate perceived changes in their emotion regulation skills. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Pre-test and post-test scores were compared to examine

changes in participants' knowledge following the intervention. Data obtained from self-monitoring worksheets and follow-up interviews were analyzed qualitatively to identify changes in the use of adaptive emotion regulation skills and participants' experiences throughout the program.

Table 2. Community Service Program Activities

Session	Duration	Method	Objective	Activities
Meeting 1 (18 May 2026) Session 1 (<i>Name Your Feeling</i>)	65 minutes	Presentation /Lecture, Simulation	To increase participant's knowledge of emotions and emotion labeling.	1. Facilitator opens the session. 2. Facilitator and students introduce themselves. The facilitator explains the objectives of the program. 3. Participants complete the pre-test. 4. Facilitator presents material on the concept of emotions. 5. Question-and-answer session. 6. Participants receive a worksheet and coloring materials. 7. Participants color the circle to represent emotions they are experiencing. 8. Several participants explain the emotions they labeled using colors. 9. Facilitator provides feedback and insights.
Meeting 1 (18 May 2026) Session 2 (<i>Emotion Regulation</i>)	50 minutes	Presentation /Lecture, Group Discussion	To increase participants' knowledge of emotion regulation.	1. Presentation on emotion regulation. 2. Question-and-answer session. 3. Discussion of emotional experiences and adaptive regulation strategies. 4. Facilitator provides feedback & insights. 5. Participants complete the post-test.
Meeting 2 (19 Mei 2026) Session 3 (<i>Tear and Rebuild</i>)	65 minutes	Presentation /Lecture, Simulation	To enhance participant's skills in using creative activities to manage negative emotions.	1. Participants complete the pre-test. 2. Review of previous material on emotions and emotion regulation. 3. Distribution of glue & patterned/plain paper. 4. Participants write negative thoughts and feelings related to university entrance examinations. 5. Participants tear the patterned paper to express negative emotions. 6. Participants create a new artwork using the torn pieces. 7. Facilitator explains the meaning of the activity. 8. Presentation on creative activities as emotion regulation strategies. 9. Question-and-answer session.
Meeting 2 (19 Mei 2026) Session 4	45 minutes	Presentation /Lecture, Simulation	To enhance participants' skills in simple self-calming techniques, including	1. Distribution of strings and beads. 2. Participants imagine situations that trigger negative emotions. 3. Participants practice slow breathing while threading beads. 4. Presentation on breathing regulation and repetitive activities as emotion regulation strategies.

<i>(From Anger to Relax)</i>			breathing regulation and repetitive activities.	5.Participants complete the post-test. 6.Collection of post-test forms. 7.Distribution of self-monitoring assignments. 8.Closing session and reflection.
Meeting 3 (22 Mei 2026)	15	Group Interview	To monit or self-mo nitoning activities & evaluate changes in participant s' skills	1.Questions regarding materials from previous sessions. 2.Discussion of participants' use of adaptive emotion regulation skills. 3.Opportunity for participants to ask questions regarding self-monitoring.
<i>Self-Monitoring Follow Up</i>				

During the implementation stage, the psychoeducational program was delivered across four sessions. The first meeting consisted of two sessions and employed presentation/lecture, group discussion, and simulation methods. Presentation or lecture refers to the structured delivery of information by a facilitator to introduce new concepts or skills efficiently and consistently to participants. Group discussion provides participants with opportunities to express their opinions and exchange ideas regarding the topic under discussion. Simulation is a method that replicates real-life situations, allowing participants to practice, experiment, and gain a deeper understanding of problems in a safe environment (Supratiknya, 2011). According to Noe (2017), simulation is a learning method that actively engages participants by encouraging them to practice and reenact the concepts or skills introduced by the facilitator.

Figure 1. Implementation of the Psychoeducational Program



Source: Community Service Documentation (2026)

The second meeting also consisted of two sessions, namely *Tear and Rebuild* and *From Anger to Relax*. In the *Tear and Rebuild* session, participants were invited to review the concepts of emotions and emotion regulation before engaging in a creative activity. They were asked to write down negative thoughts and feelings related to university entrance examinations on patterned paper, tear the paper into pieces, and then rearrange the pieces into a new artwork. Following the activity, the facilitator explained the meaning and reflection behind the exercise and delivered material on creative activities as adaptive emotion regulation strategies. The session concluded with a question-and-answer discussion. In the *From Anger to Relax* session, the facilitator guided participants through a creative activity involving beads and string while practicing breathing regulation and redirecting negative thoughts toward more positive and adaptive perspectives. Upon completion of the activity, the facilitator delivered material on breathing regulation and repetitive activities as emotion regulation strategies and facilitated a question-and-answer session. Participants then completed and submitted the post-test and received a self-monitoring assignment designed to monitor the application of adaptive emotion regulation skills in their daily lives.

A follow-up session was conducted three days after the psychoeducational intervention. Participants were asked to reflect on their experiences applying the emotion regulation skills introduced during the program. After six days of implementation, participants submitted their completed self-monitoring worksheets for evaluation. Prior to data analysis, a normality test was conducted to examine the distribution of the pre-test and post-test scores. The Shapiro–Wilk test was employed because it is recommended for small sample sizes ($n < 50$) (Mishra et al., 2019), and the present study involved only ten participants. As shown in Table 3, the difference scores between the pre-test and post-test were normally distributed, as indicated by a significance value of $p > .05$. Therefore, a paired-samples t -test was conducted to examine the effectiveness of the psychoeducational intervention in improving participants' knowledge and skills related to adaptive emotion regulation (Field, 2013).

Table 3. Shapiro–Wilk Normality Test Results

Variables	Sig.
Difference in Knowledge Pre-test and Post-test Scores	.074
Difference in Skill Pre-test and Post-test Scores	.940

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics 27

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 4 indicate an increase in scores across both measured aspects following the psychoeducational intervention. For the knowledge component, the mean score increased from 8.10 ($SD = 2.81$) to 14.30 ($SD = 0.82$). Similarly, for the adaptive emotion regulation skills component, the mean score increased from 51.40 ($SD = 8.83$) to 67.10 ($SD = 8.17$). The observed increases in mean scores suggest positive changes in participants' knowledge and adaptive emotion regulation skills following the psychoeducational program. These findings indicate that participants demonstrated greater understanding of emotion regulation concepts and reported more frequent use of adaptive emotion regulation skills after participating in the intervention.

Table 4. Paired Samples Statistic

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre_Knowledge	8.10	10	2.80674	.88757
	Post_Knowledge	14.30	10	.82327	.26034
Pair 2	Pre_Skills	51.40	10	8.83428	2.79364
	Post_Skills	67.10	10	8.17109	2.58392

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics 27

To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, paired-samples t -tests were conducted to compare participants' knowledge and adaptive emotion regulation skills before (pre-test) and after (post-test) participation in the psychoeducational program.

Table 5. Paired Sample t-test

Paired Differences								
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pre-Post Knowledge	-6.20	2.485	.7859	-7.978	-4.421	-7.888	9	< .001
Pre-Post Skills	-15.70	6.864	2.170	-20.610	-10.789	7.232	9	< .001

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics 27

The results of the paired-samples t -tests indicated significant improvements in both knowledge and adaptive emotion regulation skills following participation in the psychoeducational program. For the knowledge component, the mean score increased from 8.10 ($SD = 2.81$) at pre-test to 14.30 ($SD = 0.82$) at post-test, representing a mean difference of 6.20 points ($MD = -6.20$, 95% CI [-7.98, -4.42]). The difference between pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, $t(9) = -7.888$, $p < .001$. Furthermore, the effect size was large ($d = 2.494$), indicating a substantial improvement in participants' knowledge of emotion regulation following the intervention.

Similarly, significant improvements were observed in adaptive emotion regulation skills. The mean score increased from 51.40 ($SD = 8.83$) at pre-test to 67.10 ($SD = 8.17$) at post-test, with a mean difference of 15.70 points ($MD = -15.70$, 95% CI [-20.61, -10.79]). The paired-samples t -test revealed a statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores, $t(9) = -7.232$, $p < .001$. The effect size was also large ($d = 2.287$), suggesting a substantial increase in participants' adaptive emotion regulation skills following the psychoeducational intervention.

Table 6. Paired Samples Effect Size

				95% Confidence Interval	
		Standardizer	Point Estimate	Lower	Upper
Pre-Post Knowledge	Cohen's d	2.485	-2.494	-3.771	-1.189
	Hedges' Correction	2.595	-2.389	-3.611	-1.139
Pre-Post Skills	Cohen's d	6.864	-2.287	-3.481	-1.063
	Hedges' Correction	7.168	-2.190	-3.334	-1.018

Source: IBM SPSS Statistics 27

According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, both effect sizes fall within the very large range, indicating that the observed improvements were not only statistically significant but also practically meaningful. These findings suggest that the creative-expressive psychoeducational program was highly effective in enhancing participants' knowledge of emotion regulation as well as their ability to apply adaptive emotion regulation skills.

Discussion

The findings showed that the mean knowledge score increased from 8.10 at pre-test to 14.30 at post-test, representing a mean difference of 6.20 points. These findings indicate that the psychoeducational intervention was effective in improving participants' understanding of emotions and adaptive emotion regulation strategies. The increase in knowledge may have occurred because participants received structured information and had opportunities to discuss the material throughout the program. These results are consistent with the findings of Damayanti et al. (2024), who reported that psychoeducation delivered through lectures, discussions, and games significantly improved adolescents' mental health literacy. Similarly, Syahrin et al. (2024) found that emotion regulation psychoeducation enhanced high school students' understanding of how to maintain positive relationships when facing disagreements with their peers.

In addition to improving knowledge, the intervention also resulted in a significant increase in emotion regulation skills. The mean skill score increased from 51.40 to 67.10, representing a mean difference of 15.70 points. These findings are consistent with

Supratiknya's (2011) assertion that psychoeducation contributes not only to the development of conceptual knowledge but also to the enhancement of personal and social skills that are important for academic success and individual adaptation.

The improvement in knowledge represents an important initial step, as individuals must first understand what they are experiencing before they can effectively regulate their emotions. Berking and Whitley (2014) explained that the abilities to become aware of, identify, and understand emotions constitute the foundation of adaptive emotion regulation. They further argued that emotion regulation consists of skills related to recognizing, understanding, accepting, and managing emotions, all of which can be developed through practice. Therefore, the improvement in skills observed in this study suggests that participants began to apply more adaptive emotion regulation strategies when facing the pressures associated with university entrance examinations.

The improvement in emotion regulation skills may have been influenced by the use of creative activities as part of the psychoeducational process. Unlike conventional instructional approaches that primarily focus on cognitive aspects, creative activities provide participants with opportunities to directly experience the processes of emotional awareness, expression, and regulation. Creative activities involve the process of creating or expressing oneself through activities such as drawing, coloring, writing, listening to music, or producing artwork. Through these activities, individuals can express emotions that may be difficult to communicate verbally in a safer and more positive manner (Malchiodi, 2012). Creative activities also provide individuals with personal space to take a break from daily pressures and experience moments of calm that support emotional regulation (Pöllänen, 2015).

During the *Name Your Feeling* session, participants were encouraged to identify and label their emotions using colors as emotional symbols. This activity helped increase emotional awareness, which is one of the fundamental skills within the Adaptive Coping with Emotions (ACE) model developed by Berking and Whitley (2014). The ability to recognize and label emotions is an important foundation of emotion regulation because individuals who can identify emotions more specifically tend to have a better understanding of their emotional experiences and are more capable of managing their emotional responses (Pishghadam & Shayesteh, 2017). Greater clarity in recognizing emotions enables individuals to better understand their emotional states and reduce the intensity of distress, particularly when experiencing strong negative emotions (Levy-Gigi & Shamay-Tsoory, 2022). Previous studies have also shown that the ability to recognize

and understand emotions is associated with better psychological well-being among adolescents (Morrish et al., 2018). Therefore, the *Name Your Feeling* activity not only helped participants recognize their emotional states but also trained fundamental skills necessary for more effective emotion regulation.

Creative activities were also incorporated through the *Tear and Rebuild* session, in which participants wrote down negative thoughts and feelings, tore the paper into pieces, and then rearranged the pieces into a new and more meaningful form. This activity can be understood as a form of cognitive reappraisal. According to Gross (1998, 2002), cognitive reappraisal is an effective emotion regulation strategy because it helps individuals change the meaning they assign to a situation without avoiding or suppressing the emotions that arise. Within the ACE model, this process can also be related to acceptance and tolerance, namely the ability to accept and tolerate negative emotions when they cannot be changed or when attempts to change them are not possible (Berking & Whitley, 2014).

In the context of students facing the pressures of university entrance examinations, this activity provided an opportunity to view failure, uncertainty, and worry as experiences that can be learned from and addressed constructively. This finding is consistent with the study by Fancourt et al. (2019), which demonstrated that creative activities support emotion regulation through mechanisms such as distraction, cognitive reappraisal, and increased self-understanding. The improvement in emotion regulation skills may also have been influenced by the *From Anger to Relax* session, which combined breathing regulation techniques with a repetitive beading activity. Breathing regulation helps reduce the physiological activation associated with negative emotions such as anxiety, fear, and anger. Ma et al. (2017) found that diaphragmatic breathing exercises can reduce stress and negative affect while improving attention. Within the framework of Affect Regulation Training (ART), this strategy is categorized as the skill of modification of emotions, which refers to the ability to adaptively alter the intensity and duration of negative emotions (Berking & Whitley, 2014).

The repetitive beading activity used in the *From Anger to Relax* session helped participants focus their attention on the task at hand. Engagement in repetitive activities, such as drawing, coloring, or performing simple rhythmic movements, can help individuals concentrate on a single activity and reduce tendencies toward distractibility, thereby supporting the emotion regulation process (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Mrazek et al., 2022; Fancourt et al., 2019). This process is associated with attentional deployment, a

mechanism that helps individuals regulate emotions more adaptively (Gross, 2014; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). This finding is particularly relevant given that the initial assessment revealed that many students frequently worried about failing university entrance examinations, compared themselves to peers who had already been accepted through the SNBP pathway, and experienced concerns regarding their academic future.

The findings of this study have important practical implications for twelfth-grade students preparing for university entrance examinations. Adolescence is a developmental period characterized by heightened emotional intensity and various developmental demands, including academic pressures and future planning (Steinberg, 2014; Berk, 2018). When students lack adequate emotion regulation skills, such pressures may develop into anxiety, stress, and even more serious psychological problems (Aldao et al., 2010; Compas et al., 2017). Therefore, emotion regulation psychoeducation combined with creative activities may serve as an accessible preventive strategy that can be implemented in schools to help students cope with academic pressures more adaptively. The findings of this study suggest that the combination of psychoeducational content, emotional reflection, creative activities, and simple emotion regulation exercises was effective in significantly improving both students' knowledge and emotion regulation skills.

CONCLUSION

The creative-expressive emotion regulation psychoeducational program implemented with twelfth-grade high school students demonstrated positive outcomes in improving participants' knowledge and emotion regulation skills. The evaluation results revealed significant improvements in participants' knowledge of emotions, adaptive emotion regulation, and the use of creative activities as emotion management strategies. Furthermore, participants' emotion regulation skills increased following their participation in the entire psychoeducational program. These improvements suggest that the combination of psychoeducational content, group discussions, reflection on emotional experiences, and creative activities helped students better understand their emotions while also facilitating the application of more adaptive emotion regulation strategies. The creative activities incorporated into the program provided participants with opportunities to express, accept, and manage negative emotions that emerged while facing the pressures of university entrance examinations. Schools are encouraged to implement emotion regulation psychoeducational programs on an ongoing basis as part

of their mental health promotion and prevention efforts. Future studies may involve larger samples, incorporate control groups, and conduct longer-term evaluations to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness. This study has several limitations, including the relatively small number of participants and the use of a research design without a control group. In addition, the evaluation period was relatively short, making it difficult to determine whether the observed improvements in participants' emotion regulation skills would be maintained over the long term.

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