



## The Effect of Expressive Writing Therapy on Self-Efficacy and Subjective Well-Being Students

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### Article Info

#### Article history:

Received 20 January 2024

Received in revised form 23

February 2024

Accepted 4 March 2024

#### Keywords:

Expressive Writing Therapy

Self-Efficacy

Subjective Well-Being

### Abstract

High academic pressure, personal obstacles, and the challenges brought by the pandemic can lead to stress and diminished self-confidence in students. In this context, self-efficacy and subjective well-being emerge as crucial factors influencing the learning process. Barriers such as a lack of outlets for expressing emotions and difficulties in overcoming problems can impede students' academic journey. This research conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Bangun Purba aims to examine the impact of expressive writing therapy on students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being. The study involves the development of an expressive writing therapy module, incorporating a scale with validated and reliable measures. The application of this therapy to students follows a quasi-experimental method using a nonequivalent control group design. The research sample consists of two groups: an experimental group subjected to expressive writing therapy and a control group. The results indicate that in the control group, there is no significant difference in self-efficacy (Wilcoxon test,  $p=0.0798$ ) and subjective well-being (t-test,  $p=0.3691$ ) before and after the post-test. However, in the experimental group, a significant difference is observed in both self-efficacy (t-test,  $p<0.05$ ) and subjective well-being (Wilcoxon test,  $p<0.05$ ). Simultaneously, both aspects can be enhanced through expressive writing therapy (MANOVA,  $p<0.05$ ). This research highlights that the developed expressive writing therapy module effectively improves students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being.

## Introduction

Pressure and obstacles within students are largely influenced by personal desires that are not in line with the conditions of their learning environment, such as busy school curriculum, making decisions, continuing studies, majors, teachers and friends who have diverse characters, and demanding parental expectations. achieving maximum performance and so on. The heavy academic demands at school and outside of school make students become bored, bored, lazy, lack self-confidence, feel inadequate in the learning process, and experience a decline in the quality of their learning. This of course ultimately becomes an obstacle in achieving the goals of education itself.

Difficult situations between external demands that are not balanced with their desires and abilities often make students feel stressed. The lack of knowledge, experience, and environmental support for students' needs often makes students lose their ability to overcome the problems they face and develop their potential. The lack of media to express what students feel also makes it difficult for students to express what they feel (Yakushko & Blodgett, 2021).

Self-efficacy is defined as a person's beliefs about their ability to organize and carry out a program of action necessary to achieve goals (Baron & Byrne, 2004). Individuals with low self-efficacy do not think about good ways to deal with difficult tasks. When faced with a

difficult task they reduce their efforts and give up quickly. They are also slow to improve and gain their self-efficacy when facing failure (Bandura, 1997).

Subjective well-being is an individual's evaluation of his life, including a cognitive assessment of his life satisfaction as well as an affective assessment of his emotions (Diener & Lucas, 1999). A person is said to have high subjective well-being if they feel satisfied with their living conditions, often feel positive emotions and rarely feel negative emotions. Subjective well-being can be determined from the presence or absence of feelings of happiness (Diener & Lucas, 1999).

Students also experience conditions of fatigue, anxiety, fear, worry, and boredom due to their inability to follow the learning process at school. This condition is indicated by behavior that is not focused on learning, not being responsive in interacting with subject teachers during learning, not doing learning assignments, skipping school, and low interest in taking part in competitions or competitions (Lopez & Snyder, 2012). Several students also had counseling with guidance counselors and complained about several things, namely feelings of anxiety and not being able to do their assignments optimally, not being sure that they were able to achieve learning outcomes according to their expectations, and starting to feel bored with the learning routine at school. This shows the characteristics of low student self-efficacy. Some students also show characteristics of a low level of subjective well-being as indicated by behavior that is difficult to adapt to the current learning situation, and difficult to make friends and interact with classmates so they do not feel comfortable when at school. Apart from that, some students resist violating school rules, and when counseling is carried out, students tend to get angry and offended easily (Smith et al., 2021).

Self-efficacy and subjective well-being are two things that are very important for students because they will greatly influence students' learning motivation. For this reason, various kinds of problems that can disrupt students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being must be addressed immediately and one way to handle this can be through expressive writing therapy (Creswell et al., 2007). Expressive writing therapy is a writing process that is an individual's expression and reflection and is carried out with one's wishes or the guidance of a therapist or researcher (Balton, 2011). In general, expressive writing therapy aims to increase understanding of oneself and others, increase creativity, self-expression, and self-esteem: strengthen communication and interpersonal skills, express excessive emotions (catharsis) and reduce tension, as well as increase the ability to overcome problems and function. individual adaptive (Malchiodi, 2007). Bolton also states that expressive writing therapy helps individuals to understand themselves better, and deal with depression, distress, anxiety, addiction, fear of disease, loss, and changes in their lives (Balton, 2004).

According to Bolton (2004) divide the stages of implementing expressive writing therapy into four stages, namely: First, Recognition/Initial writing which is the opening stage of the writing session. Second, the examination/writing exercise aims to explore the client's reaction to a particular situation and is the stage where the writing process is carried out and the scope of the writing topic can be more general emotional events or specific events experienced by individuals, (Pennebaker & Chung, 2007). Apart from that, topics are not only related to past experiences but also situations that are and will be faced in the future (Dalton & Glenwick, 2009). Third, Juxtaposition/Feedback, at this stage, the writing that the client has written can be read, reflected on, and explored how the researcher feels when completing the writing assignment and/or when reading. Fourth, Application to the self, in this final stage, clients are encouraged to apply their new knowledge in the real world (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005).

Various phenomena and research regarding the influence of expressive writing therapy on self-efficacy and subjective well-being that have been carried out by previous researchers are what caused researchers to feel interested in researching the influence of expressive writing therapy on self-efficacy and subjective well-being of high school students. Negeri 1 Bangun Purba, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra.

The practical implications of these findings for educators and mental health practitioners working with adolescent populations are significant. First of all, a deep understanding of the pressures and obstacles students experience, which are often influenced by personal desires that are not aligned with the learning environment, is key to providing an effective approach. By realizing this, they can use expressive writing therapy as a tool to help students understand themselves and overcome negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and boredom. Apart from that, educators and mental health practitioners can also take advantage of this therapy to increase students' learning motivation by increasing their self-efficacy and subjective well-being. In addition, expressive writing therapy can also help students develop problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills that are important in their personal development. By reducing levels of stress and boredom and improving students' subjective well-being, this approach can help create a more positive and supportive learning environment for young people to reach their maximum potential.

## Methods

This research uses an experimental research method, namely a research method to find the effect of certain treatments on others under controlled conditions (Sugiyono, 2019). The experimental research design used was quasi-experimental in the form of a nonequivalent control group design. In this research design, the sample is divided into two groups, one group will be given treatment (experimental group) and the other group will be the control group. Both received a pretest and posttest. In the process, this research was divided into three stages, namely pre-experiment, experiment, and post-experiment. In more detail, the details of each stage will be explained in the Research Procedures section.

## Results and Discussion

The implementation of expressive writing therapy is divided into 4 sessions, each session has 4 stages as explained previously. A total of 30 students successfully participated in the entire therapy session. The remaining 3 people followed only 0-25% of the therapy stages, 1 person followed 26-50% of the therapy stages and 2 people followed 51-75% of the therapy stages.



Figure 1. Comparison of students' self-efficacy scores before and after implementing expressive writing therapy

In the experimental class, it appears that there was an increase in the students' self-efficacy scale before and after giving expressive writing therapy as shown in Figure 4.1. To test the truth statistically, a series of tests were carried out as explained in section 3.6. The test results show that both data are normally distributed, but they are not homogeneous. For this reason, the Welch test was carried out to determine the differences between the two groups of data. The Welch test for self-efficacy shows a p-value  $<0.05$  which indicates that the data in the pre-test and post-test groups are significantly different.

```
##
## Welch Two Sample t-test
##
## data:  welch_test$nilai by welch_test$tipe
## t = 9.4673, df = 54.699, p-value = 4.032e-13
## alternative hypothesis: true difference in means between group posttest and
## group pretest is not equal to 0
## 95 percent confidence interval:
##  23.16705 35.61073
## sample estimates:
## mean in group posttest  mean in group pretest
##          137.0556          107.6667
```

Figure 2. Welch Two Sample t-test for self-efficacy in the Experimental Class

The level of subjective well-being of students after implementing expressive writing therapy also shows an increase as shown in Figure 4.3. A series of statistical tests carried out afterward showed that the distribution of post-test data was not normal. For this reason, a two-sample Wilcoxon test was carried out to see the differences. The results show a p-value smaller than 0.05, which indicates that the pre-test and post-test data for subjective well-being in the experimental class are significantly different. Details of the data and series of statistical tests carried out are presented in Appendix 12-16.

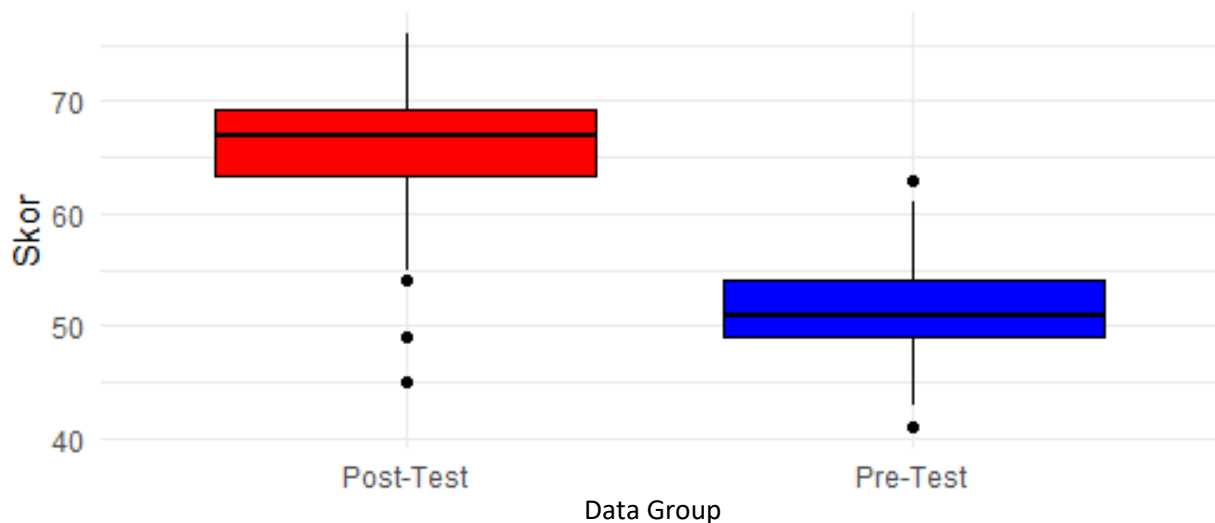


Figure 3. Comparison of students' self-efficacy scores before and after implementing expressive writing therapy

```

pretest1<-upsatu$eks.swb.pre
posttest1<-upsatu$eks.swb.post
wilcox.test(pretest1, posttest1)

## Warning in wilcox.test.default(pretest1, posttest1): cannot compute exact
p-
## value with ties

##
## Wilcoxon rank sum test with continuity correction
##
## data:  pretest1 and posttest1
## W = 90.5, p-value = 3.19e-10
## alternative hypothesis: true location shift is not equal to 0

```

Figure 4. Two Sample Wilcoxon test for subjective well-being in the Experimental Class

In the control class, the results of the Shapiro-Wilk test showed that the pre-test and post-test data for self-efficacy were not normally distributed. For this reason, a two-sample Wilcoxon test was carried out to see the differences between the two data. The test results showed a p-value above 0.05, which indicated that the pre-test and post-test data were not significantly different. Meanwhile, for subjective well-being, both data show a normal and homogeneous distribution. Therefore, a two-sample student t-test was carried out to see the differences, and it was found that the p-value was greater than 0.05. Pre-test and post-test data for subjective well-being also did not differ significantly.

```

pretest <- uji_perbedaanK$eks.se.pre
posttest <- uji_perbedaanK$eks.se.post
wilcox.test(pretest,posttest)

## Warning in wilcox.test.default(pretest, posttest): cannot compute exact p-value
## with ties

##
## Wilcoxon rank sum test with continuity correction
##
## data:  pretest and posttest
## W = 681.5, p-value = 0.7098
## alternative hypothesis: true location shift is not equal to 0

```

Figure 5. Two sample Wilcoxon test to see the differences in pre-test and post-test self-efficacy data in the control class

```

ttest <- read_excel("C:/Users/Thesis/ttest_swb.xlsx")
t.test(ttest$nilai~ttest$tipte, var.equal=TRUE)

##
## Two Sample t-test
##
## data: ttest$nilai by ttest$tipte
## t = -0.904, df = 70, p-value = 0.3691
## alternative hypothesis: true difference in means between group
posttest and group pretest is not equal to 0
## 95 percent confidence interval:
## -3.384358 1.273247
## sample estimates:
## mean in group posttest mean in group pretest
## 50.00000 51.05556

```

Figure 6. Two sample t-tests to see the differences in pre-test and post-test subjective well-being data in the control class

Through the description above, it was found that independently, implementing expressive writing therapy can increase students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being. To see whether the two dependent variables, self-efficacy, and subjective well-being can simultaneously be improved through expressive writing therapy, a MANOVA test was carried out as follows which showed a p-value smaller than 0.05. In this way, it is proven that providing expressive writing therapy can increase students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being.

## Discussion

Self-efficacy and subjective well-being are important for a student because they can influence the learning process they carry out at school. Therefore, expressive writing therapy is expected to be able to help students to increase students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being so that students can maximize their potential in achieving developmental tasks and carrying out the learning process optimally.

The research process in this study was carried out by dividing the research sample into 2 classes, namely the experimental class and the control class. Both were then given the same pre-test, but the experimental class was given treatment in the form of expressive writing therapy, while the control class was not and ended by giving a post-test to both classes.

The expressive writing therapy provided is not just free writing but will be guided by trigger questions which will make it easier for students to express their feelings.

In the experimental class, it appeared that there was an increase in the students' self-efficacy scale before and after giving expressive writing therapy. The results of the Welch test for self-efficacy show a p-value <0.05, which indicates that the data in the pre-test and post-test groups are significantly different. Meanwhile, in the control class, the results of the two sample Wilcoxon test showed a p-value above 0.05, which indicated that the pre-test and post-test data were not significantly different.

Meanwhile, for the subjective well-being variable, the level of subjective well-being of students after the expressive writing therapy experiment showed an increase by showing a p-value smaller than 0.05, which indicates that the pre-test and post-test data for subjective well-being in the experimental class were significantly different. Meanwhile, in the control class,

the results of the two sample Wilcoxon test showed a p-value above 0.05, which indicated that the pre-test and post-test data were not significantly different.

Overall, there is also an influence of expressive writing therapy on self-efficacy and subjective well-being. This is proven by the fact that independently, implementing expressive writing therapy can increase students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being. And the two dependent variables, self-efficacy, and subjective well-being can simultaneously be improved through expressive writing therapy, as proven by the MANOVA test which shows a p-value smaller than 0.05. In this way, it is proven that providing expressive writing therapy can increase students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being.

Based on these data, it can be said that the hypothesis in this research can be accepted, namely, there is an influence of expressive writing therapy on self-efficacy and subjective well-being, there is an influence of expressive writing therapy on self-efficacy and there is an influence of expressive writing therapy on subjective well-being.

The results of this research are also in line with research conducted by Hayes (2023) which also showed that telling one's own story, in one's language in a safe and structured atmosphere with positive feedback leads to higher self-esteem and self-esteem which can increase one's self-efficacy (Hayes, 2023). Another research was conducted on 58 second-semester students of the Faculty of Psychology, Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta. shows a significance value of 0.015 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Expressive writing has a significant effect on increasing self-efficacy. Expressive writing as a way of expressing emotions can be used to reduce stress within oneself which in the long term can disrupt bodily health (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016).

According to Diener et al. (2016) conducted an expressive writing intervention where individuals wrote about their deepest thoughts and feelings which showed that compared to participants who were not given expressive writing intervention, workers who engaged in expressive writing exercises writing for three days felt more positive emotions and experienced other positive results such as reduced workplace incivility. in the 2-week follow-up assessment.

Research conducted by Cayubit (2021) used a between-subject design, which is a rigorous and comprehensive psychological process carried out on 23 students who volunteered to take part in this research with results showing that levels of happiness and life satisfaction had increased (Cayubit, 2021).

Another study involving teenagers with lupus to find out the effectiveness of expressive writing to improve the subjective well-being of teenagers with lupus also showed the results of a qualitative analysis which explained that expressive writing therapy could be a cathartic medium for teenagers with lupus even though quantitatively it did not show the same results. significant in providing a positive influence on subjective well-being conditions (Rovieq et al., 2021).

The practical implications of these findings for mental health educators and practitioners are significant. Expressive writing therapy has proven to be effective in increasing the self-efficacy and subjective well-being of adolescent students. In this research, therapy provided a platform for students to express their emotions, restructure negative thought patterns, and build mental resilience. These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting the positive effects of expressive writing therapy on subjective well-being. This shows that this approach has a positive impact on supporting students' mental well-being and improving their academic performance. Thus, educators and mental health practitioners can utilize expressive writing therapy as an effective strategy for supporting student development.

## Conclusion

Based on the results of the research that has been carried out, it can be concluded that: in the experimental class, it appears that there was an increase in the students' self-efficacy scale before and after giving expressive writing therapy. The results of the Welch test for self-efficacy show a p-value  $<0.05$ , which indicates that the data in the pre-test and post-test groups are significantly different. Meanwhile, in the control class, the results of the two sample Wilcoxon test showed a p-value above 0.05, which indicated that the pre-test and post-test data were not significantly different. Meanwhile, for the subjective well-being variable, the level of subjective well-being of students after the expressive writing therapy experiment showed an increase by showing a p-value smaller than 0.05, which indicates that the pre-test and post-test data for subjective well-being in the experimental class were significantly different. Meanwhile, in the control class, the results of the two sample Wilcoxon test showed a p-value above 0.05, which indicated that the pre-test and post-test data were not significantly different.

Overall, there is an influence of expressive writing therapy on self-efficacy and subjective well-being. which is proven by the MANOVA test which shows that the p-value is smaller than 0.05. In this way, it is proven that providing expressive writing therapy can increase students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being. As a recommendation, incorporating expressive writing therapy into educational practices can be beneficial for enhancing students' self-efficacy and subjective well-being. Educators and practitioners may consider integrating expressive writing exercises into the curriculum to provide students with a tool for self-reflection and emotional expression. Additionally, further research and exploration of expressive writing therapy in various educational settings could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of its potential benefits for students' mental and emotional well-being.

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