The Correlation between Emotional Competence and Help-Seeking In Adolescent with Deliberate Self-Harm

Ni’matuzahroh¹, Anggun Putri Utami² and Sadia Mewar¹

¹Faculty of Psychology, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia and ²Magister Sains of Psychology, Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia.

* zahroh@umm.ac.id

Abstract

Deliberate self-harm (DSH) is self-harming behavior without suicidal intent, so adolescents need to do help-seeking. One of the factors of help-seeking is emotional competence. This study aims to determine the relationship between emotional competence and help-seeking in adolescent perpetrators of DSH. Respondents totaled 103 people using purposive sampling technique. The results there is a relationship between emotional competence and help-seeking in adolescent DSH offenders (p = 0.000). The implications of this study can help adolescent perpetrators of DSH in overcoming their problems by increasing their emotional competence. And parents can be the first helper by communicating about what DSH adolescent perpetrators feel. And for future researchers, it is hoped that they can expand variables related to other factors related to emotional competence and can develop interventions to improve emotional competence in adolescent DSH perpetrators

Key words: deliberate self-harm, emotional competence, help-seeking

Introduction

Deliberate Self-Harm (DSH) is any intentional act of self-harm causing physical injury without wanting to die (Khalifah, 2019; Thesalonika & Apsari, 2021). Some adolescents with DSH consider their actions as an attempt to calm themselves and transfer their emotional pain (Asyafina & Salam, 2022). DSH can be a result of family issues, peers, traumatic experiences during childhood, and self-punishment (Asyafina, 2022; Hidayah et al., 2022; Paramita et al., 2020; Putri, 2022).

According to a survey by YouGov, 36% of Indonesians have attempted self-harm, the majority of which were children and early adolescents (Makarim, 2019). Besides, there is a finding that females are more prone to self-harm action than males; they tend to pull their hair while males hit themselves (Rini, 2022). Furthermore, research from Hidayati et al., (2021) stated that self-harm prevalence reached 50% and 38%, referring that victims have attempted the action up to 10 times and their ages ranging between 12 to 19 years. The age range is included in the adolescent group, where emotional turbulence appears and might trigger irrational behavior, such as self-harm, drug abuse, and drinking problems (Ulfah, 2022). This inability to control emotional turbulence result in the need for help-seeking (Sukertiningsih, 2022).
Help-seeking is a situation where a person seeks help from other people through consideration, suggestion, treatment, and support in solving the issue (Rahmat & Anggraeni, 2023). Help-seeking is when a person seeks help from others through consideration, suggestion, treatment, and support in solving the issue. Help-seeking is expected to expedite problem-solving to reduce the psychological pressure experienced by the victim (Ashley & Vangie, 2005).

Previous research on adolescents who are prone to DSH refers to those who attend school full-time, which might cause academic stress and bullying (Lim et al., 2019). Other research stated that DSH behavior in adolescents is often hidden; they prefer non-professional help-seeking such as peer, teacher, and family (Simone & Hamza, 2020; Thai et al., 2020). Nevertheless, peers without adequate knowledge often provide inefficient suggestions for DSH victims (Lim et al., 2019). Adults can become the external influence to help introduce, normalize, and start the help-seeking process, while the internal influence can become a significant influence against and re-negotiating the perception of the need for help-seeking as perception can assist in emotional changes (Hassett & Isbister, 2017; Robillard et al., 2021). One factor that affects help-seeking behavior according to Rickwood et al., (2005) is emotional competence.

Rahmawati (2016) defines emotional competence as understanding, managing, and expressing social and emotional aspects of one's life. This competence can help to gain adaptive purpose which develops emotion (Gao et al., 2019). Additionally, emotional competence is the key to emotional balance in adolescents and functions to build good relationships with others (Qorida, 2021). Nevertheless, the majority of adolescents who do not achieve mature self-control and have unstable results in the appearance of insecure feelings, fear of loneliness, and anxiety (Sary, 2017).

According to Mikolajczak et al., (2009), there are five aspects of emotional competence: identifying, expressing, understanding, managing, and utilizing emotion. Emotional competence produces subjective well-being and resilience for adolescents to deal with future stress. (Saarni, 1999). This finding is supported by another research that proves that emotional competence can reduce cyberbullying potential and increase subjective well-being at school (Schoeps et al., 2018), happiness and emotional well-being (Bustamante et al., 2019), and social and academic success (Denham, 2019). Another research stated that DSH victims need to develop and understand emotional competence to understand their behavior and optimize effective treatment (Andover & Morris, 2014).

A previous study in Indonesia (Rahmawati, 2022) correlated help-seeking with mental health literature in college students. Another research on academic help-seeking by Swadharma et al., (2018) applied to 2-grade students of a junior high school experiencing learning issues. Additionally, research by Winarni (2017) also correlated help-seeking with bullying victims’ behavior at school. Similar research discussed the two variables applied to early and intermediate adolescents at a private Christian school and late adolescents of university students (Ciarrochi et al., 2003; Ciarrochi & Deane, 2001). Therefore, this study is significant in providing additional insight into variables related to adolescents’ age range: early – late adolescent. This study aims to find the correlation between emotional competence and help-seeking in adolescents with DSH. The hypothesis proposed in this study is the positive correlation between emotional competence and help-seeking. This study is expected to add a reference for related variables and guide DSH victims in solving their problems.

**Method**

**Participants**

The participants of this study include adolescents in transitional periods between childhood and adulthood (Santrock, 2018). The sampling technique applied in this study is non-probability sampling, which includes consideration prior to sample-taking. (Yusuf, 2014). The non-probability sampling technique in this study is purposive sampling, where participants were chosen based on a particular consideration (Sugiyono, 2019). The participant criteria in this study include the age range of 13–21 years and those who have experienced self-harm within the last six months. Table 1 provides participant demographic data for this study.

**Research Instruments**

Variables in this study consist of two: emotional competence as the independent variable (X) and help-seeking as the independent variable (Y). The emotional competence in this study covers the adolescent DSH victims’ ability
Table 1. Research Subject Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13,6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>86,4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–18 years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15,5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19–21 years</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>84,5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To handle their emotions and others based on their age range and social environment. Emotional competence is measured using The Profile of Emotional Competence (PEC0 instrument developed by Brasseur et al., (2013) which has been adapted to Indonesian language by Megawati & Wulandari (2020). PEC refers to the five aspects of emotional competence: identifying, expressing, understanding, managing, and utilizing emotion. PEC consists of 50 items; each aspect is ten items. This scale is a Likert scale: 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The sample of emotional identification is "when a situation touched me, I immediately know what I feel," emotional expression, "I do not understand why I am distressed;" emotional understanding, "I can express my feelings;" emotional management, "When I feel sad, I can easily consol" my feeling," and emotional utilization "I involve feeling to improve life choices." The reliability scales of emotional competence applied to the six samples prove a good internal consistency, ranging from $\alpha = 0.60$ to $\alpha = 0.83$ (Brasseur et al., 2013). In the Indonesian version scale by Megawati & Wulandari (2020) the reliability scale of the interpersonal dimension reached $\alpha = 0.622$, and the interpersonal dimension reached $\alpha = 0.750$.

The help-seeking in this study refers to adolescents with DSH who seek help from other people as they realize their being incapable of solving their problems. The help-seeking is measured using a 10–item scale of the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ) developed by Wilson et al., (2005). This GHSQ version includes 4 items of informal sources (closest partners, friend, parents, relatives), 4 formal sources (mental health professional, hotline support, general practitioners/doctors, religious leaders), 1 reverse item (I did not seek help from anyone), and 1 other source (I seek help from other people who is not on the list above). The scale used in this study is the Likert scale, which ranges from 1 (very unlikely) to 7 (very likely). The GSHQ scale achieved a reliability scale of 0.85. The writer then found the emotional competence variable validity 0.372–0.789, and its reliability was 0.966, comprising 48 valid items and two null items. Meanwhile, the help-seeking variable achieved validity between 0.473 and 0.821 and reliability of 0.831 with nine valid items and one null item.

**Data Analysis Technique**

The data analysis in this study is done by distributing scales to adolescents with DSH and is processed using SPSS version 25. The data analysis test uses Pearson to measure the correlation between two variables.

**Results and Discussion**

**Results**

This study was conducted on 103 adolescents with DSH in different regions in Indonesia. The following statistic was produced based on the results about emotional competence and help-seeking behaviour of adolescents with DSH.

Table 2. Variable Category and Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>53,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help-Seeking</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>68,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 3, adolescents with DSH averagely have high emotional competence, with an index of 53.4%, while their help-seeking level is on an intermediate level, with an index of 68.9%.
Table 3. Normality Test Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.200</td>
<td>Normal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data normality test using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, where normality is achieved when the significance value > 0.05. Based on Table 3, the emotional competence achieve 0.200, which means that the data is normally distributed.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Test Result

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Help-Seeking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Competence</td>
<td>Pearson Correlation 0.479</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the Pearson correlation test result, this study’s emotional competence and help-seeking are included as normal, as its significance is > 0.05.

Discussion

Emotional competence functions to initiate good relationships with other people; therefore, this competence can maintain individual emotional balance (Qorida, 2021). This competence is also one of the factors of help-seeking (Rickwood et al., 2005). Based on this study using Pearson correlation analysis, there is a positive correlation between emotional competence and help-seeking in adolescents with DSH, the correlation of which has an intermediate level in youth of 13–21 years. This study proves that the higher the emotional competence in adolescents with DSH, the higher the help-seeking intention. This result proves that the hypothesis in this study is accepted; there is a correlation between emotional competence and help-seeking in adolescents with DSH.

Adolescent is a critical stage as many issues and pressures arise, such as conflict, social relations, and mood changing (Harefa & Mawarni, 2019). Some teenagers can cope well with their issues, but some others are unable, resulting in a psychological, physiological, and social decrease. The issues can cause stress, depression, and mental health problems to which they can respond negatively, such as DSH behaviour. (Azizah & Yasin, 2022; Harefa & Mawarni, 2019). Afrianti (2020) stated that DSH is an attempt to regain emotional balance and decrease the psychological pain one is experiencing. Previous research stated that adolescents with DSH did not find another positive alternative in dealing with their issues; they consider DSH to produce stress while facing an issue (Zakaria & Theresa, 2020). Similar research by Saputra et al. (2022), also stated that DSH produces temporal relief, calm, and satisfaction.

DSH commonly starts during adolescence, with the highest proportion occurring between 10 and 20 (Lubis & Yudhaningrum, 2020). Additionally, DSH behaviour requires follow-up and awareness since it relates to the physical condition one has (Anggadewi, 2020). This study found that the majority of DSH victims were female, in line with previous research in America showing that most victims of mental health crises were women, a situation that ended up with depression and DSH behaviour (Twenge, 2020). Additionally, other research states that females are more prone to DSH than males (Raffagnato et al., 2020).

This study shows that emotional competence is correlated with help-seeking. The time concept is one of the aspects of help-seeking, where a person realizes the need to change occasionally (Rickwood et al., 2005). This need means that an emotional coping strategy can help predict help-seeking; thus, help-seeking initially needs to overcome emotional competence (Ward-Ciesielski et al., 2019).

Further, another aspect of help-seeking is the source of help: the ability to recognize the help source (Rickwood et al., 2005). The ability helps adolescents with DSH determine the most appropriate help source without problems, formally and informally. Nevertheless, the majority of adolescents with DSH prefer informal help-seeking, especially with their friends, as they feel the urge to have social support (Taqilla & Ariana, 2023). Adolescents with DSH consider that sharing their problems with friends can reduce their negative emotions (Aini & Puspitasari, 2022). This finding aligns with the previous research that discussing problems with the closest people will provide support, suggestions and help to decrease the problems (Prabandari & Indriana, 2020). On the contrary, research by Fekih-Romdhane et al., (2020) stated that only a few DSH adolescents sought professional help. However, they are more competent in providing measures, medication, sustainable support, and specialist treatment recommendations (Mughal et al., 2020).

Types of issues are the final aspect of help-seeking, where a person can recognize their problem (Rickwood et al., 2005). Therefore, adolescents with DSH can determine the steps to take in solving their problems. Previous research
stated that emotional competence is significantly correlated with social solving; therefore, DSH victims can cope with negative emotions and solve the problem (Faradiba & Abidin, 2022; Kwok et al., 2015).

On the other hand, the limitation of this study is that the data sampling was conducted online using Google Forms; therefore, there is a possibility that the subjects did not fill in the form accordingly. Besides, there is still limited research discussing emotional competence and help-seeking as the references.

**Conclusion**

The result shows a significant correlation between emotional competence and help-seeking in adolescents with DSH. Therefore, the higher the emotional competence, the higher the help-seeking is, and vice versa.

**Implication**

The implication of this study is to help adolescents with DSH cope with their issues by improving their emotional competence. On the other hand, the parents can become the first party to help the victim by communicating to express their feelings so that they can find the root cause and how to cope with it. Additionally, further research needs to expand the variables related to emotional competence and develop interventions to increase emotional competence in adolescents with DSH.

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**Authors’ contributions:**

Conceptualization APU and NZ, Methodology, APU, and NZ, designed the study, APU and NZ, Investigation, APU, analyzed the data, APU, and NZ, writing original draft preparation APU, Review and editing NZ, SM, Supervision NZ, SM, All Author have read and approved the final version of the manuscript, APU, NZ, SM, writing the published version of the manuscript NZ and SM.

**Competing Interest:**

The authors declare no conflict of Interest that could be perceived and prejudicing the impartiality of the research reported.

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