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The Three Good Things Intervention to Increase Subjective Well-Being in Students SMK PGRI Jatinangor

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Abstract

Adolescence is a transitional period that is complex and full of emotional conflicts. This study aims to determine whether the three good things intervention can improve subjective well-being in adolescents. The Three Good Things Intervention is a positive psychology intervention designed to improve individual well-being by focusing on positive experiences. The participants were 38 students of SMK PGRI Jatinangor, Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) were used to measure the students' subjective well-being and then analyzed using paired sample t-test. The results show that there is no difference in subjective well-being within the experiment group who get the three good things intervention after and before. Thus, it can be inferred that there is no significant effect of the three good things intervention on subjective well-being in adolescents. One of the reasons why the intervention might have been ineffective was that participants felt confused and bored with the gratitude activities in the intervention.

Keywords: Adolescence, Subjective Well-being, Three good things

Introduction

Adolescence is a transitional stage from childhood to adulthood, including biological, psychological, and social changes (Lestari, 2021). During adolescence, an individual tends to feel curious and wants to explore various new experiences, both positive and negative, as a form of self-discovery, maintaining their existence in the environment and self-functioning in the wider community. According to Husna and Karneli (2021), this also needs to be done to successfully become a responsible adult, improve their potential and competence in certain fields, and improve their life in the future. Everything that happens during adolescence period can affect adulthood; therefore adolescents are required to have a creative and innovative way of thinking, be professional, responsible, and daring to take risks on their potential as provisions to improve the quality of life and achieve happiness (Irsyad et al., 2019). Research conducted by Ehrlich Isaacowitz (in Nisfiannor, et al. 2004) found a tendency for the life satisfaction level in young individuals is likely to be low. Low life satisfaction and the dominance of negative affections such as depression and confusion indicate that adolescents tend to have low subjective well-being. Erikson (in Santrock, 2002) explained that adolescents are in the psychological moratorium phase, which is the period between the security of childhood and independence in adulthood. This condition contributes to low subjective well-being in adolescents. In addition to focusing on the psychological moratorium state experienced by adolescents, other factors can also affect the subjective well-being of adolescents, namely, low level of awareness of the environment possessed by adolescents.

Well-being was first introduced in the 18th century, along with the need for people to improve a decent life by optimizing their potential and gaining happiness. In general, well-being

is believed to be a combination of feelings and functions as well as a person's good self-experience. Linley and Joseph (2004) suggested that subjective well-being (SWB) is a form of happiness that refers to life satisfaction and affection balance. In 2015, improving well-being became one of the common goals of the 193 countries contained in the UN members (Abidin et al., 2022). WHO defines the concept of well-being as positive mental health, where a person is in a state of well-being where they realized that they have their own abilities; they're able to overcome the pressures in their life; and able to work productively, being helpful; and able to contribute to their surrounding environment (WHO, 2018). This is supported by research conducted by Deaton (2007); Huppert and So (2013); Oishi, et al., (2007), that well-being within a person will affect their productivity, have more effective learning outcomes, and increase creativity. Research conducted by Diener (2017) also proves that individuals with high well-being show several good indicators in their lives, namely better physical health and longer life (Abidin et al., 2022).

The well-being conditions of everyone vary depending on the problems they face in their life and how they face those challenges. Diener, Suh, and Oishi (1997) state that an individual is considered to have low subjective well-being if they feel dissatisfied with their lives, rarely experience joy and affection, and more often feel negative emotions such as anxiety or anger. Conversely, individuals with high subjective well-being tend to be more social, altruistic, active, have a good interpersonal or intrapersonal relationship, are able to maintain good health, have good conflict resolution skills, experience positive emotions, and are relatively satisfied with their life (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005; Maddux, 2018).

One of the factors affecting subjective well-being is gratitude (Hasibuan et al., 2018; Panjaitan & Rahmasari, 2021; Panggagas, 2019). An individual who has gratitude will feel satisfied with their achievement, so that they will be more likely to feel positive emotions often, and this can lead to increased subjective well-being (Yildirim et al., 2019). Lestari (2021) explains that gratitude can reduce anxiety within an individual while increasing their positive emotions, which increases their positive affect as one of many aspects of subjective well-being and ultimately improves one's subjective well-being. Safaria (2018) states that individuals who can feel grateful more often tend to have high self-acceptance, which contributes to life satisfaction and increasing happiness. This is reinforced by the results of research by Darmawanti and Gaol (2022), which shows a significant relationship between gratitude and subjective well-being, with a positive relationship.

One of the effective gratitude interventions to improve one's subjective well-being is "The Three Good Things"" method (Lai & O'Carrol, 2017). This approach was first developed by Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005), where participants were asked to write down three positive things that happened in their daily lives for 21 days and provide a causal explanation for each good thing. The results showed an increase in happiness and a decrease in depressive symptoms within one month, and the effects lasted up to six months after follow-up (Seligman et al., 2005). The impact of the ""three good things"" intervention on physical health and well-being showed an increase in gratitude, higher levels of positive affect and increased subjective well-being (Lai and O'Carroll, 2017). This is in line with research conducted by Andriani & Lukman (2023), which shows that there are differences in subjective well-being changes in participants who get the three good things intervention.

Based on the findings of previous studies and the challenges that occur in adolescence we are interested in further examining the effectiveness of "The Three Good Things" intervention to improve subjective well-being in adolescents, especially adolescents at SMK Jatinangor.

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Figure 1. The Three Good Things intervention framework

Methods

The participants in this intervention were 38 students from SMK PGRI Jatinangor. Nineteen students participated in "Three Good Things" intervention, while the remaining nineteen students did not. The students were assigned to groups using randomization based on pre-test scores. We gathered those with equivalent scores and then divided them into experimental and control groups. After pretest was conducted, followed by the provision of interventions, and finally a post-test was conducted in three days after the whole intervention process was done. Satisfaction With Life Scale by Diener et al., (1985) which was adapted by Akhtar to Indonesian (2019), and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule by Watson et al., (1988) which was adapted by Akhtar to Indonesian (2019) were used to measure the subjective well-being among the students.

Module and the procedure of The Three Good Things intervention

We applied the "Three Good Things" intervention which was conducted previously by Lai and O'Carroll (2017) We made some modifications, 1) the intervention duration from 21 days to 14 days, by considering time efficiency; 2) we replaced the gratitude diary methods with a google form instead. Instructions were given to the participants, daily reminder messages were sent to them for 14 days straight via WhatsApp. Participants were asked to write on the provided google form page every night for 14 days straight, documenting three good things they have experienced individually that day. The intervention instructions were as follows:

> "*Our lives are filled with countless blessings, both significant and seemingly insignificant. It is important to realize that even someone who helps us achieve a goal or offers a small act of kindness contributes to the good in our lives. By empathizing with their perspective, appreciating their efforts, and acknowledging the kindness they provide, we find many reasons to feel gratitude. Think of and write down three things you are grateful for today*."

Implementation phases

Table 1. Stages of the intervention activities

Preparation	
Activity	- Designing the Intervention Program - Initial surveys - Submission of permission letter to conduct intervention at SMK PGRI Jatinangor - Developing google forms to measure pre-test and post-test on both SWLS and PANAS scale, and a google form page to submit "The Three Good Things" daily gratefulness journal
Session 1	
Activity	- Introducing the researchers in charge to the students - Explaining procedure of intervention - Conducting a pre-test on both SWLS and PANAS scales

Objective	- To introduce the method of the intervention program and introducing the researchers in charge - To take an initial data on students' subjective well-being using SWLS and PANAS scales
Session 2	
Activity	- Division of student groups based on pre-test scores, using the randomization method - Formatting Whatsapp groups for each assigned group
Objective	- To re-explain regarding the data collection instructions
Session 3-17	
Activity	- Distributing the “Three Good Things" intervention google form link to students every evening for 14 days straight - Giving instructions on how to fill out the “Three Good Things" intervention to the students - Checking daily whether each participant from the experiment group has filled out the distributed google form
Objective	- To collect the data from the group experiencing the “Three Good Things” intervention - To supervise whether all participants have filled the “Three Good Things"" intervention google form page every night
Session 18	
Activity	- Conducting a post-test on both SWLS and PANAS scales - Closing the intervention procedure by revisiting the school - Give out souvenirs for the school in a form of a plaque as a token of gratitude
Objective	- Taking final data on students' subjective well-being using the SWLS and PANAS scales - Requesting feedback from the student participants and the school as an evaluation and input for us of the entire intervention process - Thanking the school and the students for their willingness and cooperation in participating in the entire research procedure

Results

The implementation of the “Three Good Things" Intervention activities started on May 15th,2024 until June 3rd, 2024. During the first day and the last day we directly visited SMK PGRI Jatinangor to conduct a pretest and post-test for both SWLS and PANAS scale. On the first day, there were 38 students who attended the introduction and explanation of the intervention. However, only 30 people filled out the pretest according to the time provided.

In this intervention, we divided the population of students of SMK PGRI Jatinangor into two groups, the control group did not get any intervention, and the experimental group experienced the “Three Good Things” intervention. We measured the difference in the level of subjective well-being in students between two groups. Based on the line chart shown in Figure 2, t-test analysis resulted in 0.456 with p value > 0.05, indicating that there was no significant difference in change between the pretest and post-test means of the life satisfaction score within the experimental group. Likewise, the results of the t-test conducted on the mean score of pretest and post-test of the negative effect scores with a value of 0.221 (p value > 0.05), indicate no significant difference in change between the tests. In contrast to the mean score on positive

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effect which has a paired sample t-test result of 0.018 with p value < 0.05, meaning the hypothesis is accepted, which indicates a significant difference in change between the pretest and post-test means score. As shown in Figure 2, the line chart shows a significant decrease.

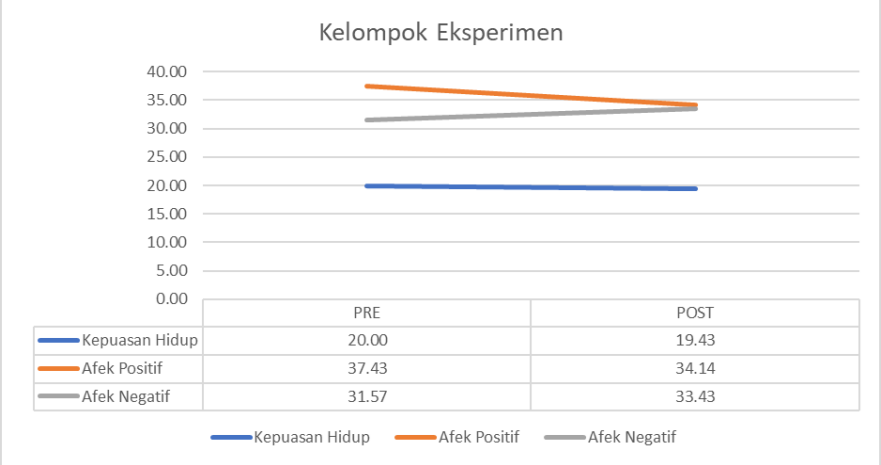


Figure 2. Paired sample t-test within the experimental group

Within the control group, as shown in Figure 3, the results of hypothesis testing on each of the mean score of pretest and post-test scores of life satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect respectively had p values > 0.05 (KH = 0.597; AP = 0.892; AN = 0.689), meaning that there were no significant difference in change between the three indicators.

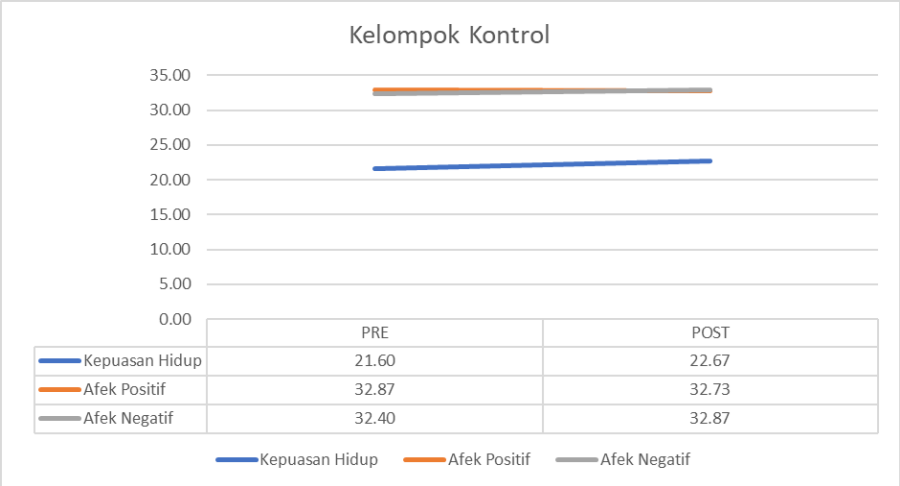


Figure 3. Paired sample t-test within the control group

In addition to the results of the difference test between the mean scores of the pretest and posttest in the experimental group and the control group, we display a diagram of the number of the students participating in the intervention over time. Figure 4 shows a significant decrease. Based on a brief interview related to decreasing in filling out the gratitude link, the average participant answered because they felt bored, confused about what else to answer, and had nothing to be grateful for that day.

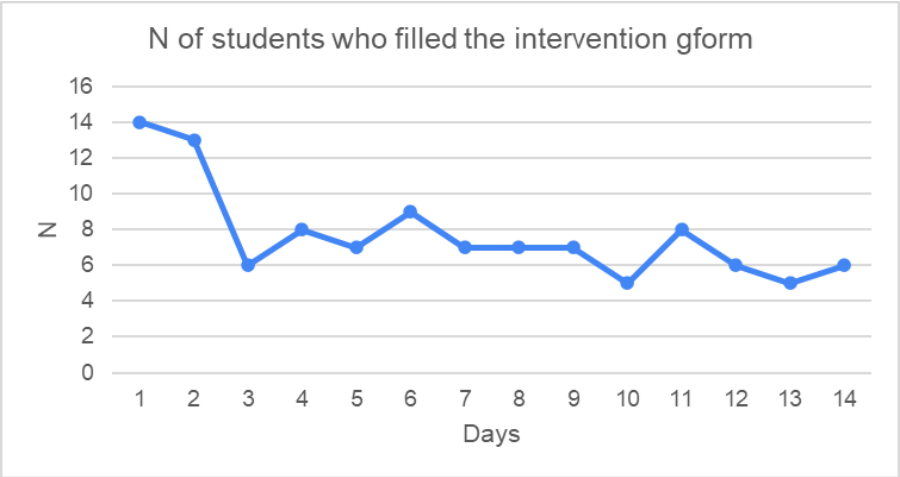


Figure 4. Diagram of N of students who filled the intervention google form each day

Based on the answers to the gratitude that participants wrote every day in the g-form link, we categorized the gratitude into eight categories, namely related to health, parents/family, divinity, spouse, friends, finance/economy, education/school, and general things (can be seen in Figure 5).

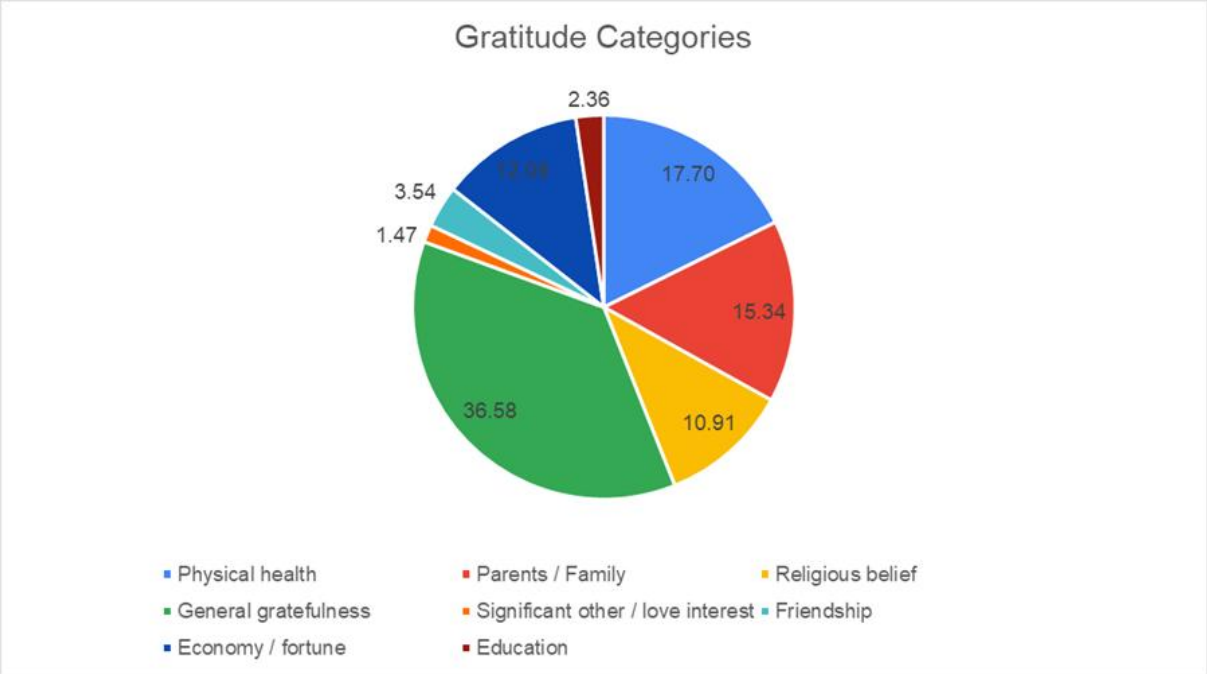


Figure 5. Categories of gratitude experienced

Discussion

The implementation of "The Three Good Things" intervention aims to increase life satisfaction, positive affect, and negative affect in students of SMK PGRI Jatinangor. Based on the results, there was no change in the mean score of life satisfaction and the mean score of negative effects in participants who received the intervention, while for the mean score of positive effect, there was a significant decrease. This results is unexpectedly, and are also

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contrary with the results of research from Seligman et al., (2005), Lai & O'Carrel (2017) and Andriani & Lukman (2023) which find that the intervention "The Three Good Things" can improve a person's subjective well-being.

Referring to Erik Erikson's developmental theory, which states that various factors can affect adolescents' subjective well-being (Santrock, 2002). Reviewing the research of Ehrlich Isaacowitz (in Nisfiannor, 2004), the tendency of life satisfaction levels in young individuals (adolescents) tend to be lower. This is due to the dominance of negative affections, such as confusion, depression, and etc. Arnett (1999) adds that adolescents experience confusion two or three times more often than adults and experience mood disorders more often than pre-adolescent children. This notion is supported by statements from some participants who felt confused and also bored regarding the repetition of gratitude activities in the given intervention. In addition, according to the researcher's observation, some participants were less enthusiastic about communicating and had to be reminded to fill in the online diary g-form link provided. They never filled in the online diary before being reminded, and even for some students, an extra reminder was needed.

According to Hasibuan et al., (2018) gratitude could influence subjective well-being in individuals. With gratitude, a person will feel satisfied with what has been achieved, so that the individual will feel positive emotions more often, and this can improve subjective well-being (Yildirim et al., 2019). As a trait, gratitude can be interpreted as a person's tendency to feel gratitude in his life, although the tendency to feel grateful does not always appear but someone who has this tendency will be more often grateful in certain situations (Prabowo, 2017). However, in this study, different results were obtained, it was seen that most participants were not consistent in filling out the gratitude link. This was due to boredom, feeling confused in determining things to be grateful for, and feeling that there was nothing to be grateful for on that day. In addition, the decrease in the average score on positive affect can occur due to various factors, in this case, the dominance of negative affect. This is in line with research by Diener, Suh, and Oishi (1997), which states that individuals are considered to have low subjective well-being if they feel negative emotions such as anxiety or anger more often. This is also corroborated by participants who are less involved in filling out daily online gratitude.

McCullough et al. (2002) distinguished the trait of gratitude in four aspects, namely, 1) Intensity, very grateful when positive things happen; 2) Frequency, the intensity of individuals in expressing gratitude every day; 3) Span, individuals feel grateful in various life circumstances, for example in their work, health, or family; 4) Destiny, individuals often feel feelings of gratitude towards more people. Based on the results of the categorization that has been done, the gratitude written by the participants is mostly in the Span aspect, where they feel grateful for their current life, the family they have, work status (students), and other general things (can be seen in figure.5). Although the frequency of some participants was not consistent in writing gratitude every day during the intervention, some other participants had a greater tendency to feel and practice gratitude. We recommend conducting sessions that provide a comprehensive explanation of the meaning and benefits of gratitude for teenagers. Additionally, interventions should be targeted at those who are genuinely interested in trying them. This approach will help maintain motivation to fully participate in the activities and avoid attrition.

Conclusion

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of The Three Good Things intervention to increase subjective well-being in adolescents of SMK PGRI Jatinangor. The results of this study stated that there were no significant changes in subjective well-being in participants who

received the three good things intervention and those who did not. The possible explanation for our results is that students do not engage in the process of being grateful out of their own desire. Since it is perceived as an obligation, they tend to internalize negative feelings during this activity rather than gaining its positive benefits.

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