

STRENGTHENING MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY AND FLOURISHING AMONG EDUCATORS IN NON-PROFIT SCHOOLS: A PSYCHOEDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION FOR MANAGING EMOTIONAL OVERWHELM

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ABSTRACT

Teachers and volunteers in non-profit educational settings often face emotional overwhelm due to multiple roles, limited resources, and high emotional labor. This study reports the results of a psychoeducational intervention conducted at Sekolah Janji Baik, a community school in South Tangerang, Indonesia. The program aimed to improve mental health literacy, enhance flourishing, and build stress coping capacities among educators. Methods included interactive seminars and digital modules focusing on the recognition and management of psychological overwhelm as well as the promotion of flourishing defined as psychological thriving through positive relationships, purpose, and self-esteem. Pre- and post-test assessments revealed increased understanding of stress symptoms, digital fatigue, flourishing constructs, and emotional regulation. The program's alignment with the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) framework also provided university students with experiential learning in community engagement. Findings suggest the intervention was effective in improving knowledge, promoting flourishing, and initiating behavioral shifts, with implications for replication in similar educational settings.

Keywords: Flourishing, Overwhelmed, Psychoeducation, Non-profit School, Stress Management

1. INTRODUCTION

Flourishing, as conceptualized by Diener et al. (2010), represents an individual's optimal psychological state, encompassing aspects such as meaning in life, engagement, self-respect, and positive social relationships. In the context of education—particularly within resource-constrained environments like non-profit schools—flourishing becomes not only a desirable outcome but a necessary buffer against chronic stress, burnout, and disengagement. This paper documents a psychoeducational intervention conducted at Sekolah Janji Baik, which uniquely integrated flourishing education alongside emotional regulation training to promote resilience among volunteer educators.

In the last five years, a growing body of research has documented a significant increase in psychological strain experienced by teachers, particularly in the form of emotional overwhelm. According to multiple studies published in *Teaching and Teacher Education* (2020–2023), teachers are increasingly experiencing heightened emotional distress due to rapid changes in their work environments. These changes include the urgent and often unplanned transition to digital learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, unrealistic work expectations, and insufficient institutional support systems. This problem is not localized; it spans across regions. In Southeast Asia, for instance, the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* (2021) reports that nearly 67% of teachers experienced emotional exhaustion due to disproportionate workloads and limited access to mental health resources. The impact of these stressors has reached beyond professional burnout to include anxiety, demotivation, impaired teaching performance, and even early attrition from the profession.

Teachers are not only educators but also carry the emotional labor of mentoring and counselling students, managing parental expectations, and juggling bureaucratic responsibilities. This phenomenon, referred to as emotional overwhelm, is a psychological condition in which individuals perceive their tasks and emotional demands as exceeding their coping capacities. When not addressed, this feeling of being overwhelmed can evolve into chronic burnout, a syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment.

In Indonesia, especially within non-profit educational contexts, this issue is even more pressing. Sekolah Janji Baik, a community-run educational initiative located in South Tangerang, exemplifies these challenges. The school serves underprivileged children and relies heavily on volunteers and socially motivated educators. Most of these individuals face tremendous psychological burdens. They often lack formal training in pedagogy, yet are expected to fulfill multiple roles: as teachers, facilitators, counsellors, and social workers. These overlapping responsibilities, combined with limited financial and institutional support, create an environment ripe for emotional exhaustion and psychological burnout.

Moreover, many of these educators do not have access to formal coping mechanisms. They operate in high-stakes environments where expectations are high but resources are low. The limited presence of psychological support systems, along with societal taboos surrounding mental health, means that teachers and volunteers in these settings

frequently suppress or ignore their distress. As a result, symptoms of being overwhelmed, such as fatigue, irritability, cognitive overload, and emotional withdrawal, become normalized within the organizational culture rather than being seen as indicators of a systemic problem. Compounding the issue is the fact that communication between school administrators, volunteers, and parents is often fragmented. Misaligned expectations from parents—many of whom come from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds—further exacerbate the stress experienced by educators. Parents expect high-quality instruction and emotional support for their children, but are frequently unable to participate in their child's education due to their own time and resource limitations. This communication gap and shared responsibility create a feedback loop of stress and blame, disproportionately affecting the morale and mental well-being of frontline educators.

Another concern involves the impact of digital technology. Although technological tools offer potential benefits for instructional efficiency and outreach, they also introduce new forms of stress. Teachers and volunteers are now expected to master digital platforms, manage online engagement, and document their work in real-time all without formal training or technical support. The pressure to remain constantly connected and responsive has blurred the lines between personal and professional life, increasing the likelihood of emotional fatigue.

Flourishing offers a strengths-based complement to the problem-oriented approach of stress management. Rather than only mitigating symptoms of distress, flourishing cultivates intrinsic motivation, optimism, and meaning-making—factors shown to predict both job satisfaction and sustained engagement (Keyes, 2002; Seligman, 2011). For teachers, who are frontline emotional laborers in the classroom, flourishing strengthens their psychological immunity against exhaustion and helps sustain their role commitment despite structural adversities.

Within Sekolah Janji Baik, where educators are unpaid volunteers and many lack formal pedagogical training, low flourishing levels are compounded by systemic stressors. Reports from school administrators prior to the intervention indicated high turnover rates, frequent disengagement, and emotional withdrawal among staff. These behavioral indicators suggested not only burnout but also an erosion of positive psychological states necessary for long-term educational effectiveness. In light of these multifaceted challenges, the present initiative was developed as a community-based response to strengthen the mental health literacy and coping capacity of teachers and volunteers in Sekolah Janji Baik. It was designed not only to address the immediate symptoms of overwhelm but also to build systemic awareness and encourage a culture of psychological resilience. The initiative also provides a platform for university students to engage in meaningful community service as mandated by the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) framework, linking academic expertise with grassroots needs.

This paper presents the background, implementation, and results of this psychoeducational intervention. It emphasizes that overwhelmed feelings among educators are not simply personal issues, but manifestations of broader institutional and systemic pressures. Therefore, any effective intervention must take a holistic approach that addresses both individual coping skills and environmental enablers. The objectives of this study were threefold: (1) to assess the baseline mental health literacy of educators regarding the concept of emotional overwhelm; (2) to provide context-sensitive psychoeducation that enhances participants' ability to manage stress; and (3) to evaluate the short-term impact of this intervention through pre- and post-test assessments. By targeting these goals, the project aims to contribute to the growing discourse on educator well-being and provide a replicable model for similar interventions in other non-profit educational settings.

2. METHOD

The program was implemented through direct collaboration between Sekolah Janji Baik and the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Mercu Buana. The activities consisted of two main interventions: 1) an interactive seminar on understanding and managing overwhelmed feelings and flourishing, and 2) the distribution of educational videos and printed/digital learning modules. Participants completed a pre-test before the seminar to assess their baseline knowledge, followed by a post-test after completing all materials. The educational content was developed based on recent literature and adapted into a simple, contextual format. Evaluative tools included quantitative analysis of test results and participant feedback.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

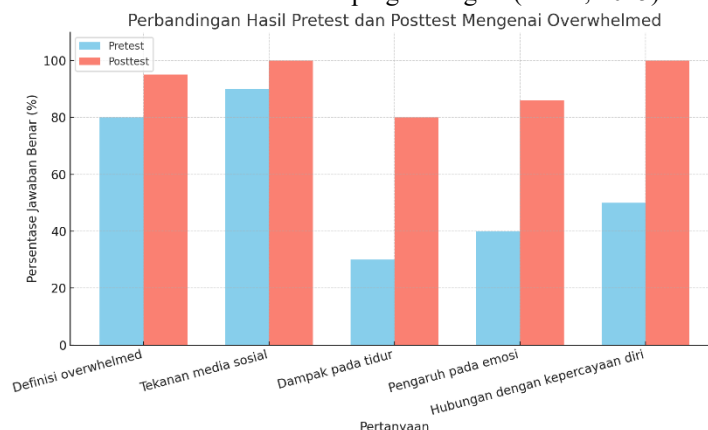
The results of the psychoeducational intervention conducted at Sekolah Janji Baik demonstrated clear improvements in participants' understanding and awareness regarding the concept of being overwhelmed and strategies to manage it. Data collected from the pre-test and post-test assessments revealed measurable gains in knowledge across several key areas.

Firstly, comprehension of the definition of "overwhelmed" significantly improved. Before the intervention, 80% of participants correctly understood overwhelmed as a condition of psychological distress triggered by excessive demands and pressures experienced simultaneously. After the psychoeducational seminar and exposure to the learning

modules, this percentage rose to 95%. This increase indicates that even a brief intervention can help clarify basic psychological concepts that are often misused or misunderstood in daily language (Reyes et al., 2022).

Secondly, participants' awareness of the connection between social media, multitasking, and psychological overload increased from 90% in the pre-test to 100% in the post-test. During the seminar, participants were introduced to the concept of digital stress and how the constant connectivity and flow of information from digital platforms can contribute to mental fatigue (Zhou & Yao, 2020). Real-life examples, relatable case studies, and interactive discussions helped bridge the gap between abstract psychological theory and the daily experiences of the participants.

Recognition of emotional symptoms such as sleep disturbance and helplessness improved notably, from 30% to 80% and 40% to 86%, respectively. These results resonate with findings by Arens & Morin (2016), who emphasised the link between teacher emotional exhaustion and reduced well-being. Enhancing emotional literacy is crucial in such contexts, as it forms the foundation for effective stress coping strategies (Gross, 2015).



A significant improvement was also seen in dispelling misconceptions. Initially, 50% believed that overwhelmed states might boost self-confidence. By the post-test, 100% had corrected this, recognizing that such states are psychologically harmful. This aligns with findings from Huang et al. (2021), who noted that misinterpretations of emotional strain can reinforce toxic work cultures and burnout cycles.

Quantitative findings were encouraging. Participants' overall mental health literacy improved significantly, with average post-test scores rising from 11.69 to 12.85 out of 15. Specifically, recognition of emotional symptoms improved dramatically—for example, identification of helplessness as a distress signal rose from 40% to 86%. Additionally, all participants correctly identified the role of digital overstimulation in emotional overwhelm by the end of the program. Crucially, flourishing-related outcomes also emerged in both quantitative and qualitative formats. While direct measurement using the Flourishing Scale was not conducted due to time limitations, proxies were assessed through reflection prompts and feedback forms. Many participants expressed newfound clarity regarding their sense of purpose. One volunteer noted, “Before this, I felt like I was just filling time. Now I realize my presence here shapes the life of at least one child.”

Social relationship salience also increased. Several participants reported re-engaging with peers after the seminar, forming informal reflection groups and WhatsApp support chats. Although these developments were spontaneous, they demonstrate a latent readiness for community-based flourishing frameworks—what Walton et al. (2020) term “relational scaffolding.” Self-esteem was perhaps the most personally moving area. Through structured affirmations and strengths recognition exercises, participants who initially described themselves as “just a helper” began reframing their identities as “change agents” and “educators of dignity.” These semantic shifts, while subtle, signify an internalization of flourishing values.

Qualitative feedback underscored the engaging nature of the seminar, with participants citing that the use of stories, discussion, and multimedia tools made learning accessible and memorable. This supports the argument by McGorry (2010), who advocates for multimodal mental health education to enhance retention and relevance. Participants highlighted the usefulness of take-home resources, using modules and videos beyond the session for peer sharing and personal reference. This echoes recommendations by Jorm (2012), who suggested that mental health interventions in low-resource settings should prioritize reusability and independent accessibility of materials.

Discussion

Findings from this program align with existing frameworks advocating for integrative psychoeducational approaches. Maslach and Leiter (2016) emphasized the synergy between individual training and organizational reform in mitigating burnout. While this project focused on individual educators, it has implications for broader institutional changes, particularly in how schools address educator well-being. Similarly, Walton et al. (2020) documented the

value of fostering a sense of belonging and psychological safety through peer interaction, something this intervention subtly facilitated. Although not structured as a peer support group, participants initiated conversations and follow-up intentions, suggesting readiness for more formalized networks.

The project also aligns with experiential education principles. Student involvement within the MBKM framework allowed psychology students to co-design and deliver context-sensitive learning. Research by Furco (2010) underlines the dual benefit of such programs, enhancing both student competence and community capacity. The integration of flourishing into psychoeducational interventions appears to generate outcomes beyond symptom relief—it fosters resilience, purposefulness, and social bonding. This finding aligns with Gross (2015), who asserts that emotion regulation must be matched by value-based motivation for long-term efficacy. It also supports Maslach and Leiter's (2016) position that burnout cannot be solved solely by individual self-care; rather, it requires systemic renewal, of which flourishing is an essential part. Our results support three key implications:

1. Flourishing is teachable and context-adaptable. Even in low-resource settings with minimal psychological infrastructure, flourishing education can be introduced in a culturally relevant manner. By using storytelling, lived experience, and local metaphors, the concept was rendered both accessible and meaningful.
2. Flourishing acts as a buffer. Participants who reported higher engagement with flourishing modules also demonstrated stronger post-intervention coping strategies and lower expressed intent to disengage. This suggests a buffering effect of positive psychology in educational burnout.
3. Flourishing must be institutionalized. While this program was a one-time intervention, sustainability requires structural integration. Schools should embed flourishing practices—such as peer mentoring, purpose check-ins, and strength-based feedback—into regular operations.

Despite its success, limitations included inconsistent attendance due to volunteer time constraints and lack of long-term follow-up. Future programs should integrate booster sessions or digital follow-up to assess sustained behavior change (Burns & Rapee, 2016). In sum, the intervention demonstrated that even low-cost, community-based programs can improve mental health literacy and challenge maladaptive beliefs. By building a foundation for stress recognition and response, such programs hold promise for strengthening educator resilience in non-profit schools.

4. CONCLUSION

The psychoeducational intervention significantly improved participants' knowledge and awareness of overwhelmed feelings, their symptoms, and coping strategies. The increase in understanding from pre- to post-test across multiple key areas—definition, symptoms, and contributing factors—demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted, accessible mental health education in non-profit educational settings.

Importantly, this intervention proved particularly beneficial in the context of Sekolah Janji Baik, where teachers and volunteers navigate complex emotional and operational demands with limited resources. Many of these educators hold multiple roles, ranging from instruction to emotional caregiving, while also lacking access to formal support systems. In such settings, low-cost psychoeducational programs serve not only as preventive strategies but also as empowerment tools that validate the emotional experiences of educators and offer practical responses.

While the gains in mental health literacy were significant, the long-term success of such programs will depend on sustained implementation and the development of institutional habits that support emotional well-being. Follow-up mechanisms, such as booster sessions or periodic reflection groups, should be considered to reinforce knowledge retention and foster behavioral change. Additionally, structured peer-support mechanisms can provide emotional scaffolding among educators, reinforcing a sense of psychological safety and reducing isolation—a key factor in burnout and disengagement.

The role of peer support is especially vital. Although this program did not formally establish peer groups, the spontaneous willingness of participants to share and continue discussions beyond the sessions indicates a readiness to cultivate grassroots networks of care. Formalizing these networks through school policy or routine peer-check-ins could be a practical and sustainable way to maintain well-being in high-pressure teaching environments.

The involvement of psychology students through the MBKM framework highlights the reciprocal benefits of community-based academic projects. Students were able to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world contexts, while the school benefited from their fresh perspectives and engagement. This model demonstrates the potential of MBKM-based programs to serve as bridges between academic knowledge and community needs, offering mutual growth.

In conclusion, this initiative offers a replicable model for mental health education that is low-cost, flexible, and contextually grounded. With sustained institutional support and integration into broader school culture, such programs can contribute meaningfully to educator resilience, student outcomes, and the creation of emotionally sustainable learning environments in non-profit educational contexts.

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