



Fostering Green Behavior: Evaluating Psychoeducational Approaches in Environmental Awareness

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Abstract

Environmental problems and the climate crisis are in the spotlight, and are crucial issues that need to be resolved immediately. Indonesia and Malaysia are two countries that are prone to the impact of the environmental crisis, including the partner, At-Tanzil Guidance Center Malaysia. The impact of the environmental crisis is more vulnerable to the younger generation, because they are the ones who feel the consequences of the behavior of previous generations. In addition, the younger generation is the holder of responsibility for future life. Given the crucial position of the younger generation, it is important to instill an understanding of environmental awareness and encourage pro-environmental behavior so that in the future this generation can prevent the worsening climate crisis. One way to achieve this goal is by conducting psychoeducation on environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior to the younger generation. Psychoeducation is carried out by providing material on behaviors that endanger the environment and activities that can save the environment. The results of the activity showed that the participants followed the presentation with enthusiasm, and could practice environmentally conscious behavior through the game activities given at the end. These results show the importance of similar psychoeducation to the younger generation to instill environmental values.

Keywords: Environmental awareness; Pro-environmental behavior; Psychoeducational approach

1. INTRODUCTION

Environmental issues are currently in the spotlight, especially related to the worsening climate change problem. Climate change is a change in the average variation of air temperature, rainfall, and wind over time, as well as changes in the earth's atmosphere, oceans, natural water supply, snow, land, biodiversity, and living things [1] [2]. Climate change in Indonesia has an impact on various aspects, such as droughts and fires, floods, extreme hot weather, hurricanes, and rising sea levels. It also affects water scarcity, marine sector problems, food scarcity, poverty and social inequality, and climate-health impacts [3]. The impact of worsening climate conditions is also felt by the community services partner, namely the At-Tanzil Guidance Center.

The impact felt by communities and individuals is not only on physical conditions, but also psychological. The threat of experiencing bacterial infections due to polluted water, respiratory problems due to forest fires, physical injuries, and the threat of experiencing skin problems due to extreme heat are some examples of physical impacts [4]. As for mental health, climate change and environmental crises can have both direct and indirect impacts [5]. The direct impact of climate change on mental health is caused by natural disasters that occur quickly with strong impacts such as earthquakes, floods, tornadoes, and forest fires. In addition, natural disasters that occur over a longer period of time can also lead to mental health disorders such as heat waves, droughts, and water scarcity. Climate change also causes damage to the physical and social environment which indirectly impacts mental health. Individuals who lose their homes, lose their livelihoods, and are forced to move will be vulnerable to mental health problems.

The impacts of climate change on mental health can be felt by individuals from all walks of life. However, there are groups that are more vulnerable to these impacts than others. Some of these groups include indigenous peoples, individuals from low socioeconomic groups, women, children, and young individuals. Indigenous peoples are more vulnerable because they are closer to nature and mostly depend on nature for their livelihoods; if nature is damaged, these communities will be directly affected [6]. Women have greater concerns and negative emotions related to climate anxiety, and show more negative views of the government than men [7], [8].

Young people who are at a crucial time of development are also vulnerable due to the anxiety and stressors received from climate change and environmental crises. This can exacerbate the likelihood of mental health problems being experienced. Young individuals feel climate anxiety from climate change that impacts their daily lives. In addition, young individuals as a vulnerable group feel uninvolved or ignored in decision-making, and feel they have no power and power to act and make improvements to the climate crisis that occurs [9].

Another study by Lee [10] on individuals aged 8 to 19 years found that knowledge about the causes of global warming increased with age, but concern about climate change was greater in younger than older individuals. Younger individuals are more willing to take action than older individuals. The desire for action is also related to the perceived psychological distance to climate change. Adolescents who perceive climate change as an environmental problem that they face on a daily basis have a greater desire to act than adolescents in developed countries who see climate change as a broad global problem [10].

Diffey [11] research found similar results, with participants feeling negative emotions such as worry, grief, deep sorrow, fear, anger, helplessness and a sense of responsibility. These feelings tended to increase when experiencing the impact firsthand, hearing of disasters elsewhere, or when remembering the lack of action from those responsible. Participants also had fears and concerns that their homes would become uninhabitable in the future due to flooding or sinking due to sea level rise. Participants hoped for political support, mental health support, intergenerational collaboration, and an inclusive world that is eager to overcome the crisis [11].

Another study by Jaro'ah [12] found that the knowledge of young people (aged 15-29 years) in Indonesia about climate change is still lacking, but they have an awareness of the decline in climate conditions. The lack of knowledge about climate

change and its impacts can lead to a lack of pro-environmental behavior. This is because individuals lack understanding of the risks that can result from worsening climate conditions. Therefore, a psychoeducation about climate change and its impacts is needed to encourage and increase pro-environmental behavior.

The above explanations show that climate change and the environmental crisis are real conditions that have a major impact on young people. However, young people's awareness and understanding of these conditions is still not optimal, which hinders pro-environmental behavior. To overcome this, young people's awareness and concern need to be nurtured so that they can take concrete steps in the form of pro-environmental behavior. Environmentally conscious actions practiced on a daily basis can be the key to reducing the impact of climate change and the worsening environmental crisis. Referring to this reason, the service implementation team considers it important to instill a sense of environmental care and youth involvement in environmental issues. Therefore, this research aims to determine the effectiveness of environmentally conscious psychoeducation to encourage pro-environmental behavior in students as the younger generation.

2. METHODS

Based on the information that has been obtained from literature sources and information from the partners, a priority problem was found to be solved through environmental awareness psychoeducation. The main problem found is the lack of environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior in students at the partner location, which has not met the expectations of the school. The steps of activities that will be carried out to provide solutions to the partners are as follows:

- a. Preparation, which is the stage that includes all preparations prior to the implementation of the activity. This preparation stage includes team coordination and proposal preparation; coordination with the school which is carried out online; and preparing psychoeducation modules that will be provided based on case analysis and literature studies. In the module preparation process, the service team developed a psychoeducation module based on literature reviews from various sources, which finally found three main points to be shared, namely: 1) environmental problems faced by the community, including service partners; 2) the impact of environmental problems and lack of awareness on human physical and psychological conditions; 3) pro-environmental actions that students can take as an effort to overcome environmental problems.
- b. Implementation, namely service activities carried out at partner locations. The implementation of activities in the form of providing environmentally conscious psychoeducation to students at the Mulia Guidance Studio 5 Malaysia which will be carried out offline. This implementation will include two sessions, namely: 1) implementation of the community services program, and 2) monitoring and evaluation session, where the community services team will collaborate with the school in monitoring the results of the community services that has been carried out. The second session is a follow-up of the community services implementation.

The psychoeducation materials to be provided include three main components, namely: a) problems and issues that are being faced by the community, including the community around the partner location; b) the impact that these environmental problems can have on humans, which includes ecological, physical, and psychological impacts; c) pro-environmental behaviors that can be practiced by students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The implementation of the activity was carried out offline on July 3, 2023 at the partner's place. There are 18 students who participated in community service who are in the age range of 3 to 13 years. Participants are students of the guidance center who have a background as children of Indonesian workers in Malaysia.

The activity began with the introduction of the community service team and the names of the participating students. Followed by the provision of material packaged in the form of games. First, students were shown a video about sea damage due to littering which eventually resulted in fish losing their habitat. Next, students were given material about behaviors that damage the environment, such as the habit of throwing garbage, destroying plants, and so on. Then, participants were shown pictures of earth damage caused by human habits that damage the place where living things live. Followed by providing material about behaviors that students can do to protect the environment, such as sorting garbage and disposing of it according to the place, planting and watering plants, saving energy by using electricity and water in moderation. Closing the service activity, students were asked to practice the material that had been presented, namely by looking for garbage around them and throwing it into the trash can.

Students seemed enthusiastic and followed the activities happily. They were active in answering questions given during the materials. Participants also showed their enthusiasm by asking questions during the material. Based on the explanation of the person in charge of the center, the students really need the service activities provided, because it provides new knowledge and understanding to students in addition to the materials that have been given by the teacher.

The results of this study show the important influence of community service on environmental awareness psychoeducation on children's pro-environmental behavior. Environmental awareness psychoeducation allows children to learn more about environmental issues, and allows children to have more contact with the environment. Greater contact with nature can have an effect on increasing children's pro-environmental behavior [13]. The results of this service are similar to the previous service conducted by Rosanti [14] which showed that early understanding of pro-environmental behavior can form future generations who care about the environment. Djuwita and Benyamin [15] also revealed that environmental psychoeducation has an important role in shaping children's pro-environmental behavior.

Providing psychoeducation on environmental awareness and pro-environmental behaviors is important to start from a young age, as it will be more effective than when given at an older age. Świątkowski [16] found that the older a child gets, the more resistant they tend to be to pro-environmental psychoeducation. This means that the materials provided are not implemented and tend to be rejected by children. This psychoeducation method will have more impact and shape children's

behavior if it is implemented in the school curriculum [15], especially at the lower grade elementary school age.

In the future, similar psychoeducation should also target parents while involving children. Because based on a study conducted by Palomo-Vélez [17], by showing the negative impact of environmental damage on children, parents will be more encouraged to behave environmentally consciously. This is driven by the tendency of kin selection in human survival instincts, where individuals tend to prioritize offspring in order to survive the crisis.

4. CONCLUSION

The community service program conducted on July 3, 2023, demonstrated the effectiveness of early psychoeducation in fostering environmental awareness and pro-environmental behavior among children aged 3 to 13. The interactive approach, which included videos, discussions, and hands-on activities, not only engaged the students but also helped them understand the impact of human actions on the environment and the importance of adopting sustainable practices.

The results align with previous studies by Rosanti [14], Djuwita, and Benyamin [15], which highlight that introducing environmental awareness at a young age can cultivate long-term pro-environmental behavior. Świątkowski's [16] findings further support the notion that early interventions are more impactful, as older children tend to show greater resistance to behavioral changes.

Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating environmental awareness into school curricula and involving parents in similar activities. Palomo-Vélez [17] suggests that educating parents alongside children can amplify the impact by leveraging parental instincts to protect their offspring, thereby encouraging environmentally conscious behaviors in family settings.

In conclusion, early environmental psychoeducation, particularly when extended to include parents and implemented within educational systems, is a critical step in shaping environmentally responsible future generations.

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