

# Emotional Literacy Training Using Role-Playing Techniques for Junior High School Students

Sitti Riadil Janna<sup>1</sup>, Syahril<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia ; riadil.jannah@uin-alauddin.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Bone, Indonesia; syahril@iain-bone.ac.id

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## ABSTRACT

The ability to recognize and effectively communicate emotions, referred to as emotional literacy, is crucial for interpersonal success and psychological health. This study aimed to enhance the emotional literacy of adolescents in junior high school through the application of role-playing techniques within guidance and counseling services. Employing a quantitative methodology, this research adopted a pretest-posttest experimental design to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions. A total of eight respondents participated in the study. The emotional literacy scale served as the primary instrument for measuring changes in emotional literacy levels. Data were analyzed using the non-parametric Wilcoxon signed-rank test. The findings revealed that role-playing significantly improved the emotional literacy of the participants. These results have important implications for school counselors, suggesting that incorporating role-playing techniques into counseling sessions can be an effective strategy for fostering emotional development among students. This research underscores the potential of targeted educational interventions in enhancing emotional literacy, which can contribute to better emotional management and healthier adolescent development.

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## Corresponding Author:

Sitti Riadil Janna

Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar; riadil.jannah@uin-alauddin.ac.id

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Human development is a continuous process characterized by various critical phases that each individual experiences throughout their life (Campbell, 2000). One of the most pivotal of these phases is adolescence, a period marked by profound transformations that bridge the gap between childhood and adulthood (Sawyer, Azzopardi, Wickremarathne, & Patton, 2018). Adolescence encompasses a series of biological, cognitive, and social-emotional changes that are integral to human development. According to Santrock (2019), this phase serves as a critical transitional period during which individuals undergo significant growth in multiple domains, preparing them for adult roles and responsibilities. Further delineating this stage, Papalia and Martorell (2021) categorize adolescence as encompassing individuals aged 11 to 20 years, highlighting the diversity and extent of developmental changes that occur during this time. This phase is characterized not only by physical growth and cognitive advancements but also by the evolving capacity for emotional regulation and social interaction, underscoring the complexity and significance of this developmental period.

Adolescence is also known as a period of "storm and stress" in which emotional upheaval occurs accompanied by rapid physical growth and varied psychological growth (Çetin Gunduz & Tarhan Sinem, 2023). Biehler, (1982) states that the emotional characteristics of adolescents include (1) tending to be gloomy, (2) sometimes behaving violently to cover up deficiencies in self-confidence, (3) outbursts of anger often occur as a result of a combination of psychological tension, biological instability, and fatigue, (4) tend to behave intolerantly towards others by justifying their own opinions

The emotional tumult experienced during adolescence is influenced by a myriad of factors that interact in complex ways. Hormonal changes play a significant role in shaping adolescents' emotions and behaviors (Guyer, Silk, & Nelson, 2016). Additionally, the living environment contributes to emotional development and stability, as evidenced by research highlighting the impact of neighborhood and domestic conditions (Schwartz et al., 2012; Krettenauer, 2017). Family dynamics also critically influence adolescent emotional health, with parental engagement and family relationships proving pivotal (Yeh, Huang, & Liu, 2016). Moreover, the school environment and peer interactions are fundamental to adolescent emotional experiences, affecting everything from self-esteem to coping strategies (Pate, Maras, Whitney, & Bradshaw, 2019; Rawat & Gulati, 2019). The activities adolescents engage in daily further color their emotional landscape, integrating influences from their broader social environments. As adolescents navigate these various spheres, they are compelled to develop effective adaptation strategies to manage the diverse challenges and changes they encounter (Brown, 2013). This phase is deeply intertwined with the social contexts in which adolescents operate, underscoring the necessity for robust support systems that can guide them through these formative years.

When school activities fail to address the emotional upheavals adolescents face—a significant concern given the considerable amount of time they spend in educational settings—they may channel their emotions in destructive ways (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Manifestations of such distress can include aggression and violence, with behaviors ranging from brawls to substance abuse, and in extreme cases, actions as severe as homicide, sexual violence, and suicide (Sukhodolsky et al., 2016; Voulgaridou & Kokkinos, 2015; Taquette et al., 2019). These responses highlight the profound impact of the school environment on adolescent emotional health. As adolescents interact with their surroundings, the inability to process and manage their emotions constructively can lead to these negative outcomes, underscoring the need for supportive and responsive educational frameworks that recognize and cater to the emotional dimensions of adolescent development (Blakemore & Mills, 2014). This necessitates a systemic approach to integrate emotional literacy and support mechanisms within schools to mitigate such risks effectively.

According to Gardner (1996) if the emotional turmoil of adolescents cannot be overcome, problems will arise that suppress them and even adolescents can make reckless decisions, for example committing suicide. Various empirical evidence shows the emotional turmoil of adolescents, for example; various fights carried out by teenagers, such as the fights of teenagers in the city of Jambi while carrying sharp weapons. Fights between groups of teenagers were triggered by revenge from one group that did not accept being spit on (Sanjaya, 2023). Another proof of the inability of teenagers to reduce their emotional turmoil is a young woman who hanged herself in her house. The teenager with the initials SM is thought to have died by hanging himself due to a kidney disease he suffered that would not heal (Sholihin, 2022).

The brawl is evidence of the emotional turmoil experienced by adolescents. Therefore, according to Schweizer & Gotlib (2020), you need to manage your emotions well. This management will improve their ability to solve problems and emotions for others. Teenagers are also more skilled at displaying their emotions to others. For example, they become aware of the importance of covering up anger in their social relationships. They also understand better that the ability to understand their emotions constructively can improve the quality of their relationships with others (Ben-Ari & Hirshberg, 2009).

Various programs have been carried out to improve students' ability to manage their emotions. As happened in Europe, Australia, the United States, the West Pacific, Africa, and Latin America in the 1970s, health education activities shifted their emphasis from physical health to an emphasis on mental,

social, and emotional health to form the core of health education and also from an emphasis on health issues towards more positive approaches. Many school health education projects and programs include materials on teaching social and emotional competence in areas such as self-esteem, decision-making and, resisting peer pressure, and emotional literacy (Weare, 2004).

One way to help manage adolescent emotions is emotional literacy (Schumacher, 2014). Emotional literacy is a person's ability to understand, express emotions to people, respond to expressions of other people's feelings, and be responsible for the actions they take (Steiner & Perry, 2007). Emotional literacy has been implemented in schools in England. The results of applying emotional literacy provide benefits in improving the school atmosphere, more effective learning, better behavior, better attendance at school, higher motivation, higher student and teacher morale, and better results achieved by students and the school (Durlack & Wells, 1997). Schools that apply emotional literacy can do this through pedagogic strategies, as well as using the application of theory and various other learning strategies. This includes cooperative learning, group work, jigsaw, the six thinking hats, and positive-minus-interesting (Namec & Rofley, 2005).

Smith (2009) developed a comprehensive emotional literacy training program as part of the "Learning for Life" educational initiative. This program was designed with the objective of equipping students to: (1) recognize and understand their own emotions; (2) manage their emotions effectively through self-discipline; (3) empathize with others, thereby recognizing the emotions of those around them; and (4) navigate and foster relationships in various social contexts. The outcomes of this training have been notably positive. Students demonstrated improved communication skills, including the ability to express empathy and appropriately convey disapproval. Furthermore, they gained a deeper understanding of themselves, their needs, and their aspirations. Participants also showed a decreased susceptibility to stress compared to their peers and developed a greater awareness of their potential and a stronger desire to fulfill it. These results underscore the effectiveness of the emotional literacy training in enhancing both personal and interpersonal developmental aspects among students.

The development of emotional literacy training was carried out by Rifani, (2016). Rifani, (2016) developed an emotional literacy training program for students in Class VII of Junior High School. The emotional literacy components developed consist of (1) self-understanding, (2) understanding and managing emotions, (3) understanding social situations and establishing relationships with others. The limitation of this research is that it only developed the training, not testing the intervention with students. In addition, another limitation is that it is not clear which intervention techniques are used in developing students' emotional literacy.

The next emotional literacy training was conducted by Latifah, (2019). She developed emotional literacy with bibliotherapy techniques. Her research respondents were prospective counselor students at Kanjuruhan University Malang. The results showed that bibliotherapy techniques were effective for improving students' emotional literacy before and after treatment. The same thing was done by E. Morris, (2002). He conducted emotional literacy training. The emotional literacy training was given to educators in schools with Circle Time techniques. The goal is to help educators to have the skills to manage themselves and adjust to others.

Various emotional literacy training programs have been developed for students, college students, and educators, employing diverse techniques such as bibliotherapy and circle time. These programs commonly focus on recognizing one's own emotions and understanding the emotions of others. However, there is a noticeable absence of emotional literacy training that utilizes role-playing techniques. Addressing this gap, this research introduces emotional literacy training that incorporates role-playing to enhance three key aspects of emotional understanding. The first aspect, "Opening the Heart," involves training participants to both give and receive appreciation or praise. The second, "Understanding the Dimensions of Emotions," teaches participants to express their feelings to others and to respond to the emotions expressed by others. The third aspect, "Taking Responsibility," focuses on the skills of apologizing to others and accepting apologies. This role-playing approach aims to foster a deeper emotional engagement and practical skills in emotional literacy.

This study explores the effectiveness of emotional literacy training with role-playing techniques, delivered through guidance and counseling services in schools. Guidance and counseling play a crucial role in educational settings, aiming to support students in achieving developmental tasks, unlocking potential, and addressing personal, academic, and career-related challenges (Depdiknas, 2007). Emotional maturity is a vital developmental aspect that students need to master, involving skills such as recognizing personal and others' emotions, understanding diverse emotional expressions, and contextually expressing feelings. Counselors, as primary facilitators, are expected to possess both academic and professional competencies to design, implement, and evaluate programs like emotional literacy training effectively. Such training is seen as a strategic intervention to enhance students' emotional maturity, which is essential for their overall development (Ripley, 2007). This research, therefore, seeks to assess how well emotional literacy training with role-playing can improve emotional literacy among junior high school students, aligning with broader educational objectives.

## 2. METHODS

This research is experimental research with a pretest-posttest control group design. The subjects of this study were eight students of SMPN 4 Malang who were randomly selected without any particular criteria or considerations. Random selection is done with the assumption that all students already have emotional literacy although with different levels.

The instrument used to measure adolescent emotional literacy is the emotional literacy scale. The emotional literacy scale uses a theoretical construct from Steiner & Perry, (2007) which consists of the first component, Opening the Heart, which consists of (1) giving awards/commendations to others and (2) receiving awards/praise to others, the second component; Understanding the Emotional Dimension, which consists of (1) stating/expressing feelings to others and (2) responding to the expressions of other people's feelings, and the third component; Taking Responsibility, which consists of (1) apologizing to others and (2) accepting other people's apologies.

The technique used in emotional literacy training is role-playing. The stages in role-playing that will be used in this study are Shaftel's stages (in Joyce B, 1989) which suggest nine stages of role-playing, namely: (1) warm up the atmosphere; (2) selecting participants/roles; (3) arranging the stages of the role; (4) preparing observers (5) role-playing (first stage); (6) discussion and evaluation (first stage); (7) re-enactment (second stage); (8) discussion and re-evaluation (second stage); and (9) The ninth stage, sharing experiences and drawing conclusions.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of emotional literacy training can be seen in Table 1 below:

**Table 1.** Pretest and posttest Results for Emotional Literacy Training

No. Subject	Emotional literacy component												Emotional literacy	
	Open heart				Understanding the Emotional Dimension				Take Responsibility					
	MMPJ		MNPJ		MYP		MNP		MMF		MNF		Pre test	Post test
	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test		
1.	21	23	17	25	21	26	18	22	19	24	10	16	106	136
2.	16	18	18	24	15	21	11	14	17	23	12	15	89	115
3.	18	23	19	26	22	27	14	18	16	21	13	17	102	132
4.	12	15	14	18	18	23	15	17	14	19	11	13	84	105
5.	18	20	17	20	15	20	17	19	13	17	9	13	89	109
6.	13	17	14	19	19	21	13	15	15	20	7	15	81	107
7.	16	18	16	21	18	25	15	22	17	21	12	14	94	121
8.	17	17	15	19	16	21	17	21	12	19	9	10	86	107

No. Subject	Emotional literacy component												Emotional literacy	
	Open heart				Understanding the Emotional Dimension				Take Responsibility					
	MMPJ		MNPJ		MYP		MNP		MMF		MNF			
	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test	Pre test	Post test
Total	131	151	130	172	144	184	120	148	123	164	83	113	731	932
Average	16,37	18,87	16,25	21,5	18	23	15	18,5	15,37	20,5	10,37	14,12	91,37	116,37

#### Information:

MMPJ: Giving Appreciation/Praise to Others

MNPJ: Receiving Awards/Praise from Others

MYP: Declaring/Expressing Feelings to Others

MNP: Responding to the Expression of Other People's Feelings

MMF: Apologizing to Others

MNF: Accepting Other People's Apologies

The pretest and posttest results for all the skills targeted in the emotional literacy training are detailed in Table 1. This table clearly illustrates the differences in scores between the pretest and posttest across each of the trained emotional literacy skills, employing role-playing techniques. Notably, the scores from the posttest are consistently higher than those from the pretest, demonstrating an overall enhancement in emotional literacy skills among the students following the training. To quantitatively assess the significance of the improvements observed in the average scores from the pretest to the posttest, a statistical analysis was conducted. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was utilized for this purpose, operating under the hypothesis that the role-playing based emotional literacy training leads to a significant increase in students' emotional literacy skills. This methodological approach provides a robust framework for evaluating the efficacy of the training program.

- $H_0$ : There is no increase in students' emotional literacy after being given emotional literacy training with role-playing techniques.
- $H_1$ : there is an increase in students' emotional literacy after being given emotional literacy training with role-playing techniques.

Based on decision-making:

- If Probability  $> \alpha$  0.05  $H_0$  is accepted
- If Probability  $< \alpha$  0.05  $H_0$  is rejected

By using the Wilcoxon statistical test, the results of calculating the average score between the pretest and *post-test* emotional literacy training are shown in table 2.

**Table 2.** Average Score Obtained Results Pretest and Posttest

Emotional literacy	Average score results								asympt. Sig. (2-tailed)
	Pretest $t$	Category	Posttest $t$	Category	Difference (Change)	%	Z test		
MMPJ	16,37	Less Skilled	18,87	Skilled	2,5	15,27	-2,410 <sup>a</sup>	0.016 <sub>-</sub>	
MNPJ	16,25	Less Skilled	21,5	Skilled	5,25	32,30	-2,524 <sup>a</sup>	0.012 <sub>-</sub>	
MYP	18	Less Skilled	23	Skilled	5	2,77	-2,585 <sup>a</sup>	0.010 <sub>-</sub>	
MNP	15	Less Skilled	18,5	Skilled	3,5	23,33	-2,546 <sup>a</sup>	0.011 <sub>-</sub>	
MMF	15,37	Less Skilled	20,5	Skilled	5,12	33,31	-2,555 <sup>a</sup>	0.011 <sub>-</sub>	
MNF	10,37	Less Skilled	14,12	Skilled	3,75	36,16	-2,527 <sup>a</sup>	0.012 <sub>-</sub>	
Total EL	91,37	Less Skilled	116,37	Skilled	25	27,35	-2,530 <sup>a</sup>	0.011	

**Information:**

MMPJ: Giving Appreciation/Praise to Others

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MNP: Responding to the Expression of Other People's Feelings

MMF: Apologizing to Others

MNF: Accepting Other People's Apologies

The results from Table 2, which detail the Wilcoxon statistical test, show an Asymptotic Significance (2-tailed) for the total emotional literacy of students at 0.011, which is less than the significance level  $\alpha$  of 0.05. This indicates a statistically significant increase in students' emotional literacy following their participation in guidance and counseling services that utilized role-playing techniques. These findings substantiate the effectiveness of role-playing interventions in enhancing emotional literacy among students.

The observed increase in emotional literacy among students equips them with enhanced abilities to listen to the feelings of others, manage their anger, and exhibit interpersonal sensitivity. Such improvements in emotional skills are pivotal for fostering healthy social interactions and relationships. This aligns with the views expressed by Cyntia (2022), who argues that emotional literacy enables students to not only become aware of their emotions but also to manage them adaptively, thereby positively impacting their social interactions. Furthermore, individuals who engage in healthy social interactions are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors, such as cooperation and empathy towards others (Yuono & Chanum, 2014). This demonstrates the broader societal benefits of enhancing emotional literacy, suggesting that such educational interventions can contribute to more harmonious community interactions and relationships.

The implementation of role-playing techniques in emotional literacy training significantly benefits adolescents. Through role-playing, adolescents are actively engaged in exploring human relationships by simulating and discussing various scenarios. This interactive process allows them to collectively delve into emotions, feelings, attitudes, values, and a range of problem-solving strategies (Duha & Widiastuti, 2018). Such experiential learning not only enhances their understanding of interpersonal dynamics but also improves their ability to apply emotional knowledge in real-life situations. By putting theoretical knowledge into practice, adolescents develop critical emotional and social skills that are essential for personal growth and effective communication. This method fosters a deeper empathy and better prepares them to handle complex social interactions, ultimately leading to more adaptive and mature emotional responses.

The use of role playing in managing and expressing emotions is supported by research conducted by Lahiya et al., (2022), the results of role playing techniques can develop students' socio-emotions in the form of emotion recognition, emotion management, applying discipline with the concept of empathy, expressing emotions properly and appropriately and training students' communication skills. Research Hanifah et al., (2021) used role-playing techniques to reduce students' angry emotions. Furthermore, students' social emotional skills can also be improved by using role playing techniques (Duha & Widiastuti, 2018). Anggraini & Harahap's research, (2023) uses role playing techniques in improving students' regulatory abilities.

Emotional literacy training offers a wealth of benefits for adolescents, extending far beyond the simple expression of emotions. This training plays a crucial role in enhancing adolescent mental health by fostering greater happiness, improving relationships with others, managing behavior effectively, and boosting academic performance (Kliueva & Tsagari, 2018). Similarly, research by Akbag et al. (2016) and Cyntia (2022) reinforces the idea that developing emotional literacy is instrumental in improving mental health and overall quality of life. By equipping adolescents with the tools to understand and regulate their emotions, these programs help them navigate the challenges of growing up, thereby contributing to their emotional resilience and social competence. Furthermore, adolescents

who are emotionally literate are better prepared to face academic and social pressures, leading to a more balanced and fulfilling life. These findings highlight the critical importance of integrating emotional literacy into educational curriculums to support the holistic development of young people.

Research on the benefits of emotional literacy training put forward by Karsih et al., (2019) found that emotional literacy training allows students to have competence in cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects. In the cognitive aspect, students will be able to know the impact of their emotions on their thoughts and behavior. In the affective aspect, students with adequate emotional literacy competence will have insight into others and can understand the emotional condition of others under certain conditions. Meanwhile, the behavioral aspect, students who have good emotional literacy students can manage their emotions well, able to correct their mistakes related to inappropriate emotional expression and wrong responses to the emotions of others.

Further research underscores the profound impact of emotional literacy on various aspects of personal and professional life. According to Alemdar (2018), individuals with high levels of emotional literacy possess the ability to understand, express, and perceive emotions clearly and constructively. This enhanced emotional awareness facilitates their capacity to set and pursue future goals, make informed decisions, and achieve a higher level of self-satisfaction. Alemdar's findings highlight how emotional literacy serves as a foundational step towards developing emotional intelligence, which is crucial for personal growth and effective interpersonal interactions. Álvarez-Hevia (2018) elaborates on this by explaining that good emotional literacy is not only beneficial on an individual level but is also essential for developing emotional intelligence. This progression is vital for establishing effective communication, which in turn contributes to achieving both individual well-being and social harmony. The ability to communicate effectively reduces misunderstandings and conflicts, fostering a more peaceful and cooperative environment. Therefore, enhancing emotional literacy can lead to significant improvements in how individuals interact within their communities and navigate their social and professional relationships.

Research indicates that individuals with low emotional literacy often struggle with negative emotional outcomes such as low self-esteem, hatred, bullying, fear, sadness, and anxiety (Oberdieck, 2020). This lack of emotional skills can lead to detrimental behaviors and interactions, as noted in Cyntia's (2022) study, which found that students with emotional challenges frequently engage in conflict and display low tolerance, often necessitating parental intervention in problem-solving scenarios. These findings underscore the critical importance of fostering emotional literacy at every stage of life—within families, schools, and broader social contexts—to enhance individuals' abilities to interact constructively with those around them (Alemdar, 2018).

Recognizing the pivotal role of emotional literacy in personal and social development, Coskun & Oksuz (2019) advocate for the integration of emotional literacy training into educational curricula across all levels, from elementary through high school. By implementing social and emotional learning programs in schools, students can develop essential emotional and social skills that not only improve their interpersonal interactions but also contribute to a more empathetic and cohesive society. Such educational initiatives are crucial for preparing students to navigate the complexities of emotional experiences and relationships effectively.

The development of emotional literacy within school environments, particularly through guidance and counseling services facilitated by counseling educators, is crucial for aiding counselors in reaching their emotional maturity (Alfath, Taufik, & Ibrahim, 2015). Such educational efforts are instrumental not only in helping adolescents achieve emotional maturity but also in supporting them as they navigate the critical developmental task of gaining emotional independence from parents and other adults (Putro, 2017; Setyowati, 2018). This dual focus on individual growth and developmental milestones underscores the vital role that structured emotional literacy programs play in preparing young individuals to manage their emotions effectively and to engage fully and independently in their social and emotional lives.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The research findings indicate a significant enhancement in adolescent emotional literacy facilitated through guidance and counseling services incorporating role-playing techniques. This improvement equips adolescents with better skills to express their emotions, empathize with others, and foster interpersonal relationships. However, the study faced limitations due to the small size of the respondent group and its restriction to junior high school students. Furthermore, the exclusive use of role-playing techniques may not capture the full spectrum of methods available for enhancing emotional literacy. Consequently, future research should consider expanding the scope to include larger and more diverse groups, such as high school and university students. Additionally, exploring a variety of intervention techniques beyond role-playing could provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective strategies to boost emotional literacy among adolescents. These steps will contribute to the development of more robust guidance and counseling programs that can address the nuanced needs of students at different educational levels.

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