Literature Review on the Impact of People Pleasers on the Mental Health of Upper Secondary Students

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Abstract. *The phenomenon of being a people pleaser is increasingly common among students, particularly at the upper secondary level. This research aims to propose effective intervention strategies for guidance and counselling teachers in addressing students who exhibit people pleaser behaviour. It is hoped that guidance and counselling teachers can help maintain a balance between personal needs and social expectations, thus improving students' mental well-being. This research utilises the systematic literature review (SLR) method to analyse the impact of people pleaser behaviour on the mental health of upper secondary students. People pleasers often hide feelings of discomfort and anger, are easily taken advantage of by others, feel pressured, consider themselves unimportant, and feel frustrated with themselves. One approach that counsellors or guidance teachers can use with students exhibiting people pleaser characteristics is to apply assertiveness training. It is concluded that people pleaser behaviour among upper secondary students has a significant impact on their mental health. Students who tend to be people pleasers display a pattern of difficulty in refusing others' requests, fear of rejection, and a constant pursuit of social approval, which leads to mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, stress, and low self-esteem. Some recommended strategies include an individualised approach to understanding the root of the problem, assertive communication skills training, and collaboration with parents and the surrounding environment.*

Keywords: People pleaser; impact; upper secondary student; mental health; assertive training

Abstrak. Fenomena people pleaser merupakan salah satu perilaku yang semakin marak terjadi di kalangan siswa, terutama pada jenjang menengah ke atas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyimpulkan penyusunan rekomendasi strategi intervensi yang efektif bagi guru bimbingan dan konseling dalam menangani siswa yang menunjukkan perilaku people pleaser. diharapkan guru bimbingan konseling dapat menjaga keseimbangan kebutuhan pribadi dan ekspektasi sosial, meningkatkan kesejahteraan mental siswa.Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kajian literatur atau systematic literature review (SRL) untuk menganalisis dampak perilaku people pleaser terhadap kesehatan mental siswa menengah ke atas.Tingkah laku people pleaser seringkali menyembunyikan perasaan tidak nyaman dan marah pada individu, sering dimanfaatkan oranglain, merasa tertekan, merasa dirinya tidak penting, merasa kesal kepada dirinya sendiri. salah satu penanganan yang dapat dilakukan konselor atau guru bk terhadap siswa dengan karakteristik people pleaser adalah menerapkan latihan asertifdisimpulkan bahwa perilaku people pleaser pada siswa menengah ke atas memiliki dampak signifikan terhadap kesehatan mental mereka. Siswa yang cenderung bersikap people pleaser menunjukkan pola perilaku yang sulit menolak permintaan orang lain, takut akan penolakan, serta terus mencari pengakuan sosial, yang berujung pada masalah kesehatan mental seperti kecemasan, depresi, stres, dan rendahnya rasa percaya diri. Beberapa strategi yang direkomendasikan meliputi pendekatan individu untuk memahami akar masalah, latihan keterampilan komunikasi asertif, serta kolaborasi dengan orang tua dan lingkungan sekitar.

Kata kunci: People pleaser; dampak; siswa menengah keatas; kesehatan mental; latihan asertif

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of *people pleasers* is one of the behaviors that is increasingly prevalent among students, especially at the middle and upper levels. Students with this tendency have a nature that always wants to please others, even to the point of sacrificing their personal needs and interests. They tend to have a hard time saying "no," prefer to avoid conflict, and constantly seek recognition from others. This is often rooted in fear of rejection and social anxiety, which can ultimately affect mental health. Based on a 2020 study that has been conducted by Veronica Stefani then found that up to 86% of teenagers, including 78.9% of college students, want to know how much people like them. The results found that 43.9% of respondents believed that life would be better and more fulfilling if judged by others, followed by 21.1% who gave a neutral answer (between yes and no) and 35% agreed to answer no (Stefani, V., 2020). These results show that there are still many teenagers or high school students who want to please others because they feel satisfied when others appreciate and praise them.

Middle- and upper-class students are in a challenging phase of adolescent development, where they begin to form self-identity and seek recognition from their environment. Academic demands, friendships, and family expectations can be triggers for this *people pleaser* behavior. However, these behaviors can have a negative impact on students' mental health, such as causing anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and loss of confidence. Given the importance of mental health in adolescence in supporting healthy psychological and social development, research on the impact *of people pleasers* on the mental health of middle and upper secondary students is relevant.

This research will answer several important questions related to the phenomenon of people pleaser in middle and high school students. First, the research will examine the impact of people pleaser behavior on students' mental health. These impacts can include anxiety, stress, depression, and reduced self-confidence due to the constant pressure to please others. Second, the study will explore the efforts that guidance and counseling teachers can make in helping people pleaser students maintain their mental health. This includes intervention strategies such as providing emotional support, enhancing assertive skills, and applying relaxation techniques to reduce stress. This study aims to analyze the characteristics of middle and high school students who tend to have people pleaser behaviors, including the psychological and social traits that underlie these tendencies. By identifying the factors that influence this behavior, it is hoped that a deeper understanding of students' backgrounds and motivations in trying to please others can be obtained. In addition, this study aims to identify the impact of people pleaser behavior on the mental health

of middle and high school students. These impacts can include various psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, excessive stress, and impaired self-confidence. This research also focuses on developing recommendations for effective intervention strategies for guidance and counseling teachers in dealing with students who exhibit people pleaser behavior. With these recommendations, it is hoped that guidance and counseling teachers can assist students in maintaining a balance between personal needs and social expectations, and improve their mental well-being.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses the systematic *literature review* (SRL) method to analyze the impact of *people pleaser* behavior on the mental health of middle and high school students. Literature review is an important first step in developing a research plan. Literature review is the search and study of literature by reading various journals, books, and other publications related to research topics in order to compile an article on a certain topic or problem (Asbar, R. F., & Witarsa, R., 2020). Literature review was chosen because this method allows researchers to collect, analyze, and synthesize various research results and theories relevant to the topic being discussed. This approach allows authors to analyze and synthesize findings from a variety of relevant literature sources.

The literature review recognizes that knowledge will continue to evolve (accumulate), that our research topics, our society, and our research areas are already explored by society, and that we do this consciously by learning from the achievements and opinions of others. So the author is not the first to study this topic. Literature review has two main objectives. First, literature review is carried out with the aim of writing papers that introduce new research on a particular topic that needs to be known by those who study that scientific topic. This research may be published at any time in the public interest. Examples of this type of research can be found in the *Annual Review of Anthropology, the Annual Review of Sociology*, and so on. Those who are new to conducting research on a particular topic can use this annual review issue as reading material. (Tjahjono, H., 2018).

The second purpose of the literature review is for the benefit of the research project itself. In this context, conducting a literature review helps deepen knowledge about the research topic, formulate research questions, and find appropriate theories. By studying the work of others, authors can decide whether to copy, repeat, or criticize certain research. The author uses the research of others as the basis for comparing his own research. By criticizing other people's writings, we create something new. This article specifically describes the literature review for the sake of own research, especially for students who write academic works (dissertation, thesis, thesis) (Marzali, 2016). Based on this explanation, the researcher used a literature study by analyzing scientific articles published from 2020 to 2024 in national and international journals.

Technically, the steps of literature review are carried out as follows: (1) preparation, identification of fixed and bound variables, identification of data to be analyzed and identification of articles based on variable titles, (2) implementation arrangements, searches. and article collection, taking the essence of the obtained articles and matching them to the topics discussed, (3) the data analysis stage with *cluster* analysis, this stage is used to collect similarities or differences to conclude the relevance of each article, journal or book (Silvi, F. *et al*., 2020).

The research data in this literature review comes from various relevant secondary sources, such as scientific articles, research reports, journals, books, and related documents that can be accessed through academic databases and digital libraries. The data collected included the results of empirical research related to *people pleaser* behavior and adolescent mental health, as well as guidelines or recommendations for counseling interventions in the context of education.

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

People Pleaser

A people pleaser is someone who always tries to do or say something nice to the people around him, even if it goes against what they think or feel. They do this so that others do not become disappointed in them. People with a kind attitude tend to put the interests of others ahead of their own in order to be popular. They shape themselves according to the expectations of others (Shofawati, D. Z. K, 2023) On the surface, you may smile and say, "Yes", but in your heart, various objections accumulate that cause feelings of disappointment, anger, and even hatred (Newman.S, 2005). Arintya (2021) in Kompas.com stated, based on research on the factors of *people pleasers* conducted by Parapuan entitled *People Pleaser* on 328 female respondents from various backgrounds, it was found that 68% wanted to avoid conflict with their social circle. Meanwhile, from the data, it was found that 58% of respondents were afraid of hurting the feelings or emotions of those around them, and 46% of people felt uncomfortable being around others. Up to 45% of respondents found it difficult to say no because they felt uncomfortable refusing and up to 40% of respondents admitted that they wanted to be useful and appreciated by others.

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objections pile up, causing feelings of disappointment, anger, and even hatred (Newman.S, 2005). Arintya (2021) in Kompas.com states, based on research on the factors of people pleaser conducted by Parapuan entitled People Pleaser on 328 female respondents from various backgrounds, it was found that 68% wanted to avoid conflict with their social circle. Meanwhile, from the data it was found that 58% of respondents were afraid of hurting the feelings or emotions of people around them, and 46% of people felt uncomfortable being around other people. Up to 45% of respondents find it difficult to refuse because they feel uncomfortable if they refuse and up to 40% of respondents claim to want to be useful and appreciated by others.

According to Merriam Webster & Susan Newman (2023), a people pleaser is someone who always tries to do something to make others happy without thinking about themselves. In fact, this is contrary to what people think. Another definition of a people pleaser is someone who puts the needs and desires of others ahead of their own. This is a complex phenomenon and poses significant challenges to one's life. One of the main problems that arise from such behavior is the difficulty in achieving personal goals, both in personal and professional life. Although mutual respect is a positive aspect, people pleaser behavior often sacrifices personal needs and desires, resulting in harm to oneself (Alfahmi, R.R, et al, 2024). Meanwhile, according to Guntur Ramadhan (2023), people pleaser is a term used to refer to people who tend to do things to please and please others, even if it means ignoring their personal needs and desires. People who like to please others also have difficulty saying what they want or dislike against their will. People pleasers may apologize when they have done nothing wrong or feel guilty for changing their plans. People-pleasers may also be people who find it easier to say yes than to explain the reasons for saying no (Turrell. E.R, 2021). From some of the above opinions, it can be concluded that a people pleaser is someone who always tries to meet the expectations of others and feels unable to say "no" in order to get recognition and feel popular.

Mental Health of Upper Middle Students

The *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children* (HBSC) survey conducted by the WHO Regional Office for Europe found that the health and social behaviour of schoolchildren aged 11, 13 and 15 in 45 countries affected the mental health of adolescents and found that mental health was declining in various countries from 2014 to 2018 (WHO, 2020). The number of boys and girls across the region reporting poor mental health, low self-esteem, nervousness or irritability is increasing, according to the WHO Regional Director for Europe (Al Yasin, R. *et al*., 2020).

The Impact *of People Pleasers* on Students' Mental Health

People pleaser behavior is the behavior of individuals who are afraid to say "no", where individuals are afraid of making mistakes that cause individuals to often be alone, which makes individuals never express opinions and every time someone dares to speak, they stutter because of fear. In addition, the behaviors seen in the person being consulted such as always nodding, always smiling when speaking and often bowing the head and body when speaking are characteristics of individuals who have a fear of offending others. He is a person who loves others and does not want to refuse other people's requests so he will always agree to what the people around him want, he will always accept invitations to travel even though he has a job because he does not want his friends to leave him. People pleasers enjoy a peaceful world of friendship where individuals will avoid conflict so as not to be blamed. The behavior that emerges is that this individual will always be friends with everyone (Wulansari, N.E., 2023).

People pleaser behavior often hides feelings of discomfort and anger in the individual, thus making the individual unwilling to burden others, so the individual often says "that's not right", displayed with a thoughtful expression and holding his hands tightly. In addition, the individual is afraid of being considered strange or unhappy, which is shown by anger and growling indoors, a flat face, and a faint smile in the presence of people around him. People also often say "You're right" or "I need advice" and "What do you think of me?" which reflects a lack of self-confidence and an inability to find life principles. This is what Harriet Braiker points out in her book, where people who behave well must do anything, must obey and must listen, whether we accept it or not (Braiker, H.B., 2002). Meanwhile, according to Shalihah in Kompas.com, some of the mental health impacts that students can experience as a result of people pleaser are as follows:

a. Often taken advantage of by others

Being nice actually provides opportunities for others to take advantage of you. If you say yes every time you ask for a favor or something, others will not hesitate or think about your feelings. Others will use you for their own benefit, and those who like it will get tired of what they are doing.

b. feeling depressed

victims of people pleasers often feel they cannot change the situation they are in. people pleasers often put others before themselves. They even eat their own distress every day. people pleaser victims often feel they cannot change the situation they are in.

c. Feeling unimportant

Because of the breakup of the family, people pleaser children must feel that the problems they experience are caused by themselves

d. Feeling Upset with Themselves. Feeling Annoyed with Themselves

Not wanting to trouble others and other factors, make people pleasers unable to refuse whenever others ask for help or other things.

In the end, the unpleasant attitude will make him upset or annoyed. In addition, because we always put others before ourselves, this can make it difficult to live with happiness. (Shalihah, Kompas.com, 2019). This is in line with Desy Wee's opinion regarding behavior that always wants to please others so that it has an impact on their social (Wee, D., 2021).

Counselor's Efforts in Handling Students Who Experience People Pleaser

Based on the problem of people pleaser and its impact on the mental health of middle and high school students, the author has summarized from several sources about the efforts that can be made by counselors or counseling teachers to deal with students who experience people pleaser, which is done to reduce people pleaser behavior among adolescents or students, which are as follows:

1. Individual Approach: BK teachers must first conduct an in-depth assessment of the root of the problem faced by students, including students' feelings of social pressure and fear of rejection (Fadli, R., 2023). Individual counseling sessions can help students become more aware of their behavior and its impact on their own mental health.

2. Encouraging Autonomous Decision Making: BK teachers can help students to learn to make decisions based on their own needs and wants, instead of always putting others first. This approach can start by giving them freedom in choosing activities or creating a schedule that is not burdensome.

3. Specific Counseling Techniques (e.g., Empty Chair Technique): This technique allows students to better understand their inner conflicts. For example, they can dialogue with their "imaginary self" who always wants to please others, thus helping them realize personal needs that have been ignored (Muthohharoh, M., & Karneli, Y., 2020).

4. Cooperation with Parents and Other Teachers: Addressing this issue requires support from the student's immediate environment, including parents and other teachers. BK teachers can help communicate this problem to parents so that students get the right encouragement at home to be more confident and independent (Mysch.id, 2023).

5. Building Assertive Communication Skills: One important approach is to train students to communicate assertively, which is the ability to express their opinions and needs without feeling afraid or guilty. This helps them refuse requests that do not match their capacity without feeling anxious or pressured (Supini. E., 2021). According to Riyadi. S., Purwanto. T (2009) in his book "Mental Nursing Care", assertive training is an exercise that aims to express feelings without hurting others. Assertive training is also an effective intervention to improve individual social skills. Assertiveness itself is the ability to express or express an individual's personal opinions, feelings, needs and desires (Prabowo. A.S., & Asni).

In practicing assertive training, individuals have the right to express their feelings, beliefs, and opinions to others while respecting and appreciating the rights of each individual. The implementation of assertive training on individuals begins with establishing a relationship and unity of thought between the counselor and the counselee, identifying situations within the counselee that raise problems, training individuals to distinguish good and bad behavior, and then role playing with the counselor to provide feedback to the counselee. After the role play, the counselor and the counselee try to do exercises and practice in the field, then start again until the counselee feels confident in what is learned and finally provide assessment and reinforcement to the counselee to become bolder without losing respect. From these steps, assertive training essentially also aims to improve assertive behavior, but can also be used for other personal needs such as increasing self-confidence (Suwito, 2022). By carrying out assertive training, the counselor needs to provide additional encouragement so that the subject can improve assertive behavior, be more motivated to reduce people pleaser behavior through spiritual motivation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion, it can be concluded that people pleaser behavior in middle and high school students has a significant impact on their mental health. Students who tend to be people pleasers show behavior patterns that are difficult to refuse other people's requests, fear rejection, and continue to seek social recognition, which leads to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, stress, and low self-confidence. This phenomenon is more common among students under the pressure of high academic, friendship, and family expectations. The study also shows that efforts to reduce the negative impact of people pleaser on students require appropriate interventions from guidance and counseling teachers. Some of the recommended strategies include individual approaches to understand the root of the problem, assertive communication skills training, and collaboration with parents and the surrounding environment. With these steps, students can prioritize their own well-being without feeling burdened by the expectations of others, so that a balance between personal needs and social demands can be achieved, and their mental health is maintained.

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