

Journaling techniques as a self-therapy process: Building self-acceptance in adolescent girls

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how journaling can function as a self-therapy method to increase self-acceptance among adolescents through writing. Adolescence is characterized by a desire to conform to social norms, where individuals strive for acceptance by others, often accompanied by a search for identity, physical changes, and social pressures that impact self-acceptance. The research method used in writing this article is a literature review, which is a scientific study focused on a specific topic. Journaling techniques, which focus on reflective writing about experiences and emotions, have been shown to be effective in helping individuals manage feelings, including the process of overall self-acceptance. Through this literature review, this study compiled various studies that assessed the effectiveness of journaling in the context of self-therapy. The results indicate that journaling can help adolescents cope with negative emotions, recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and create space for positive thinking that supports self-acceptance. The results of this study demonstrate that journaling is not simply a writing technique but also a therapeutic strategy that plays a vital role in improving adolescent mental well-being by strengthening self-acceptance as a foundation for healthy emotional development.

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1. Introduction

The physical changes experienced by adolescents are closely related to puberty, a rapid and significant stage of physical development. As a result of these changes, adolescent girls become highly sensitive to their body image, striving to maintain an attractive physical appearance that meets societal standards (Salsabilla & Maryatmi, 2023). The phenomenon of adolescents striving to meet social expectations and become individuals they do not want to be indicates a lack of self-acceptance (Basanti & Susanto, 2020). Adolescent girls, in particular, tend to have more complex emotional dynamics, requiring appropriate channels for expressing feelings and engaging in healthy self-reflection. Therefore, a simple, easy-to-implement, yet effective intervention is needed to help adolescents develop positive behaviors. One method that can be used is journaling, a journaling activity that allows individuals to express their thoughts and feelings, increase self-awareness, and gradually develop positive habits.

Self-acceptance is a person's ability to realistically accept their strengths and weaknesses without excessive rejection. In adolescent girls, self-acceptance is often hampered by beauty standards, social comparison, academic demands, and friendship conflicts. As a result, some adolescents experience feelings of inferiority, lack of confidence, and even anxiety about their self-image. Self-acceptance can be seen in individuals who are able to assess themselves positively, both

in the present and in the past. When someone is able to see the positive side of their abilities, whether they are weaknesses or strengths, it is naturally easier to achieve self-acceptance (Febriani & Putri Harahap, 2024; Oktaviani, 2019).

Journaling is the activity of reflectively writing about thoughts, feelings, experiences, and hopes. In the context of mental health, journaling can be used as a form of self-therapy that helps individuals recognize their emotional state, reduce mental stress, and build a healthier relationship with themselves. For adolescent girls, journaling is a relevant technique because adolescence is often marked by physical changes, the search for identity, social pressure, and increased sensitivity to environmental judgment. In the process of forming a person's character, adolescence is a crucial and complicated phase, because this period is the transition from childhood to adulthood (Salsabilla & Maryatmi, 2023).

According to Chaplin (Devina & Penny, 2016), self-acceptance is an attitude that indicates recognition of existing limitations and satisfaction with one's abilities and potential. Someone who can accept themselves as they are and is ready to face change and strive to develop, reflects a high level of self-acceptance. This indicates the extent to which an individual is aware of their personality traits and is willing to live with those traits, even being able to admit weaknesses without blaming themselves (Wahyu Septiana, 2020). Thus, the individual has a desire to continue to improve themselves (Purbarini & Pratiwi, 2022) and increasingly feels about themselves, that they are indeed a very valuable individual regardless of the circumstances (Marpaung et al., 2024). Those who accept themselves have realistic expectations of their situation and value themselves, which means that the person has expectations that are in line with their abilities (Permatasari & Gamayanti, 2016). Furthermore, adolescents with high levels of self-acceptance tend to achieve psychological well-being more easily (Febriani & Putri Harahap, 2024). Social support, gratitude, spirituality, and self-acceptance have a significant positive relationship with happiness (Komarudin et al., 2022).

Based on interviews and observations of several female students at Senior High School 1 Petir, Serang Regency, data shows that low self-acceptance is characterized by dissatisfaction with physical appearance, lack of self-confidence, difficulty accepting various shortcomings or weaknesses, and the emergence of various emotional problems. Females who lack self-acceptance will experience difficulties interacting with their surroundings and will be detrimental to themselves, thus hindering efforts to develop their potential (Purbarini & Pratiwi, 2022).

The ability to accept oneself without exception is an important foundation for maintaining adolescent mental health (Sakinah et al., 2024). Research conducted by Hernandez & Levick (2014) found that minimal self-acceptance is reflected in the phenomenon of impostor behavior, characterized by feelings of intellectual inadequacy, the belief that one's success depends on luck, a lack of confidence in one's abilities, a fear of failure, underestimating achievements, and a worry that others will recognize one's incompetence. This phenomenon leads individuals to engage in rumination, which involves diverting anxiety into negative activities. (Chamberlin & Zhang, 2009)

Previous approaches to helping adolescent girls improve self-acceptance have generally involved face-to-face counseling, motivational seminars, psychological counseling, and social support from family and peers. While these approaches have their benefits, they have several limitations. Understanding the importance of self-acceptance in the psychological development of adolescent girls, journaling techniques can support them in discovering positive values within themselves and developing a better perspective on themselves (Beck & Verticchio, 2018). Journaling is an effective counseling tool recognized as a valuable way to improve mental well-being, particularly in terms of self-acceptance (Dwyer et al., 2013). In the context of counseling, journaling techniques help clients explore and express their emotions and stress (Siregar, 2020). Journaling provides an opportunity for individuals to express their ideas, emotions, and experiences, which can support them in better recognizing and accepting themselves (Sinats et al., 2005; Erford, 2017; Hasanah & Pratiwi, 2020; Hensley & Munn, 2020). Studies show that journaling in counseling has shown positive results in adolescents (Utley & Garza, 2011), adolescent girls can reduce anxiety, deepen their understanding of themselves, and find positive ways to cope with emotions and stress (Vela et al., 2019). Journaling provides individuals with the freedom to express and understand life problems, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors they experience with the aim of reducing, improving, and even resolving the burden of the problems they experience (Tas'adi, & Dewi, 2018).

The difference between journaling and a typical diary is that journaling is a therapeutic technique where writing is brought into the counseling session and shared openly with the counselor, and serves as a catalyst for the counseling process. This technique allows the client to remain focused on the ongoing counseling process even when not in the session (Hasanah & Pratiwi, 2020). This journaling technique is also adapted from the Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) counseling technique pioneered by Albert Ellis (Tas'adi, & Dewi, 2018). After journaling, something active needs to be done such as running, walking, stretching, breathing, or something enjoyable like listening to music or talking with someone (Parwanti et al., 2021). Other effects of journaling include the expression of feelings, which can lead to greater self-awareness and acceptance, which in turn allows clients to create a relationship with themselves (Tas'adi, & Dewi, 2018). Journaling can be used for self-discovery, growth, and self-actualization by channeling feelings and emotions through creative expression and the writing process (Erford, 2017).

Based on this background, the research problem in this study is how to apply journaling techniques as a self-therapy process to build self-acceptance in adolescent girls. The purpose of this study is to determine, describe, and analyze the effectiveness of journaling techniques in helping adolescent girls increase self-acceptance, so that it can become a strategy for developing psychological health that is easily implemented in everyday life.

2. Methode

The research method used in this study was a literature review, which is a scientific approach to collecting and analyzing existing research on a specific topic. This method was chosen to provide a comprehensive understanding of journaling techniques, creative counseling, and self-acceptance among adolescents. Relevant literature was identified through a systematic search of published studies. The findings from previous research were analyzed to identify patterns, similarities, and research gaps. This approach provided a strong theoretical foundation for the study.

The literature search was conducted using Google Scholar as the primary database. A total of nine relevant articles were selected for analysis. The selection process followed predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the quality and relevance of the sources. Only articles that matched the objectives of the study were included in the review. This process ensured that the literature used was reliable and appropriate for the research.

The inclusion criteria consisted of articles published in national and international journals after 2017. The exclusion criteria included articles published before 2018 and studies that did not discuss journaling techniques in relation to creative counseling and self-acceptance among adolescents. These criteria helped ensure that only recent and relevant studies were analyzed. The selected articles served as the primary sources of evidence for this literature review. Overall, the systematic selection process strengthened the credibility of the study's findings.

3. Results and Discussion

The author has reviewed and analyzed various journals related to journaling techniques in various therapeutic processes. In this study, the data sources used were scientific articles tailored to the topic of journaling techniques to increase adolescent self-acceptance. In the literature review, the study materials used as research sources are presented in the following table 1.

To understand the research findings on the use of journaling techniques in therapeutic processes or guidance and counseling services, the following will be discussed: The results of a study conducted by Hasi Titin Indah Pratiwi (2020) showed a significant improvement in emotional management through group counseling using journaling techniques for grade X IPS 2 students at Senior high School Negeri 11 Surabaya with low emotional management skills. These findings can be used by guidance and counseling teachers as a technique to help students manage their emotions. The six subjects in this study were students from grade X IPS 2 who were categorized as having low emotional management skills. The pre-test and post-test results conducted by the researcher indicated that each subject experienced improvement in emotional management. Research conducted by Parwanti (2021) showed a significant effect of REBT group counseling using journaling techniques

Table 1. Article characteristics analysis

Author name	Article type	Research design	Instruments	Subjects	Result	Implication
Titin Indah Pratiwi (2020)	Experimental quantitative research	Correlation design	Psychological scales (questionnaires, usually using the Likert scale)	Students of class X IPS 2 Senior High School Negeri 11 Surabaya	Journaling significantly improved students' emotional regulation.	Can be applied by school counselors to enhance students' emotional management.
Dinda Trijayani Abdi (2022)	Quantitative research	Quantitative correlational /descriptive design	Questionnaire/survey with Likert scale	Islamic boarding school students in Surabaya	A significant relationship was found between the studied variables.	Provides a basis for counseling services and psychological interventions.
Parwanti (2021)	Quantitative research	One group pre-test-post-test	Questionnaires and observations	Students of class XI of Senior High School 1 Candiroto Temanggung	REBT group counseling with journaling effectively reduced addictive behavior.	Journaling can be used as an intervention tool in school counseling.
Zhafirah Yumna Ashil (2024)	Educational media design	Mixed methods with stages: preparation, elaboration, synthesis, and realization.	Interviews with clinical psychologists, observations, questionnaires	High school and college students in Medan City.	The journaling kit effectively helped adolescents manage anxiety through expressive writing.	Can serve as a mental health support tool for emotional regulation and self-reflection.
Riska Okty Saputri (2019)	Quasi-experimental quantitative research	One group pre-test and post-test design	Perceived Stress Scale Questionnaire (PSS-10)	Teenagers/students at ITS PKU Muhammadiyah Surakarta,	Expressive writing significantly reduced adolescents' stress levels,	Can be implemented as a non-pharmacological stress management intervention.
Rafael Tas'adi, Yeni Satroma Dewi (2018)	Descriptive research	Qualitative descriptive analysis.	Journal/daily writing data	Fourth semester students of the Faculty of Tarbiyah, IAIN Batusangkar	Most participants reported feeling calmer, relieved, and less burdened after journaling.	Journaling is an effective counseling technique for both individual and group settings.
Ervon Veriza, (2023)	Quantitative research (quasi-experimental)	Quasi-experimental with time series design	Journal (daily positive behavior checklist sheet) + observations	Grade XI high school students in Jambi City	Journaling effectively promoted positive behavior among adolescents	Can be used as a behavioral intervention for adolescents.
Ilham Khairi Siregar (2021)	Literature review / article review	Literature review method	-	New/college students	Journaling improved self-awareness, emotional expression, and academic resilience.	Can be integrated into university counseling services to support students' well-being..
Ikrimah Nurhalimah (2024)	Qualitative research with a design approach (design research)	Design Thinking Method Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype, Test	Interviews, questionnaires	Students, fresh graduates, and workers	Most respondents experienced a quarter-life crisis; the medium improved self-awareness and emotional management.	Can help improve emotional regulation and overall mental well-being..

On grade XI students at Senior high school Negeri 1 Candioto Temanggung. The journaling technique can be used by school counselors as an intervention tool for addictive behavior. Research by Zhafirah Yumna Ashil (2024) with research results showing that journaling kits are innovative media that can help high school and college students in Medan City in managing anxiety through expressive writing therapy. The results of the study showed that journaling techniques are also very effective in helping counselors alleviate client problems, because clients are directly involved in expressing their feelings, thoughts and behavior. Through journaling kits, the goal to be achieved from this design is by distributing questionnaires that have been filled out by 54 respondents using Google Forms obtained the result "strongly agree" which means that this media can help manage anxiety experienced by a teenager.

A similar study conducted by Ervon Veriza (2023) used a quasi-experimental time series design. The subjects were 11th-grade high school students in Jambi City. The results showed that journaling techniques were effective in developing positive behavior in 11th-grade high school students in Jambi City. Journaling techniques can be used as an intervention to shape adolescent behavior. Research by Ilham Khairi Siregar (2021) used a literature review method on new/college students. The results showed that journaling techniques were considered an effective alternative intervention to help students express feelings, increase self-awareness, maintain focus during counseling, and enhance academic resilience. Journaling techniques can be implemented in guidance and counseling services at universities as a preventive and curative strategy to help students cope with academic stress and improve the quality of learning. Journaling techniques, through habituating behaviors/actions, are effective in helping adolescents develop positive behaviors. This study concluded that journaling techniques in the guidance and counseling process can reduce academic stress levels in students. Other effects of journaling include the expression of feelings, which can lead to increased self-awareness and acceptance, and enable clients to build a relationship with themselves. Research related to the development of a journal model with the concept of mindfulness journaling is accepted by the audience and can be a self-development medium that helps emerging adults better understand and develop themselves. By using mindfulness journaling, emerging adults are able to practice self-awareness, demonstrated through awareness and understanding of their own emotions, assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and the ability to build self-confidence.

Based on the results of the description of the study of scientific articles used as research material above, it can be concluded that the application of journaling techniques can overcome various emotional problems in individuals, one of which is related to self-acceptance issues. A similar study by Riska Okty Saputri (2019) examined the effects of expressive writing on stress among adolescents and college students at ITS PKU Muhammadiyah Surakarta. The results of the study indicate that expressive writing therapy significantly reduces stress in adolescents. Expressive writing therapy can serve as a non-pharmacological intervention to reduce stress in adolescents and can be implemented by mental health professionals and educational institutions as a strategy to support mental health.

In reality, understanding oneself often presents various challenges, such as comparing oneself to peers in terms of attitude, appearance, or how productive they are in activities. In today's world, self-understanding among adolescents creates new issues in the process. One frequently discussed term is insecurity, which we now encounter frequently, especially among teenagers. The prevalence of insecurity among adolescents today is caused by various factors, such as environmental influences, low self-confidence, lack of closeness with parents, and possibly the influence of social circles (Kompasiana in Uyun et al., 2023). Individuals with low self-acceptance are easily influenced by moods that interfere with positive behavior (Gunawan & Nadhirah, 2024).

Research on adolescent self-acceptance indicates that emotional factors are a significant focus in therapeutic sessions. Several studies have also demonstrated positive results regarding the effectiveness of reality counseling techniques on adolescent self-acceptance among students (Rahmah, 2019). However, to date, no research has been conducted on how to foster positive self-acceptance through creative counseling using self-journalism techniques. The studies found generally discuss journaling in relation to other psychological aspects, such as self-regulation, self-esteem, self-compassion, or psychological well-being, but none have directly focused on fostering self-acceptance through creative counseling models based on self-journalism.

Journaling is commonly used in counseling within psychology. Its purpose is to untangle complex thoughts and problems so they can be grouped into points that can be analyzed and then resolved. In counseling, writing a daily journal or a journal specifically dedicated to a specific problem can produce psychological improvements. This occurs because the process of writing this specific journal involves emotions, which can then be analyzed and analyzed visually. Typically, in the journaling process, a person visualizes their imagination with the help of tools such as colored pens, highlighters, bullet stickers, stamps, ribbons, decorative paper, and other visual aids.

Lent and Young (Erford, 2017) outline the general steps for each journaling assignment, including: 1) Describing the purpose and content of the assignment, 2) Engaging in the journaling activity, 3) Checking the client's progress and engaging them in meaningful exchanges derived from the journal's content and process, and 4) Reflecting on the client's progress. Encouraging clients and modifying activities as deemed necessary (Tas'adi, & Dewi, 2018).

According to Nova (2011), in her research, journaling can be used as a useful intervention technique for one's self-development because it has several benefits, namely: (1) As a medium for planning targets to be achieved, (2) To write down commitments, (3) As a target controller, (4) A tool for formulating new ideas, (5) As a repository of inspiration, (6) A tool for storing memory, (7) As a medium for reflection and wisdom. Positive behavior is behavior that tends to provide benefits for oneself and others (Veriza et al., 2023).

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this literature review, journaling techniques have significant potential as a self-therapy strategy for fostering self-acceptance among adolescent girls. Through reflective writing, adolescents are encouraged to recognize and express their emotions, identify negative thought patterns, evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and gradually develop a more positive and realistic perception of themselves. These processes contribute not only to improved self-acceptance but also to better emotional regulation, reduced stress and anxiety, and enhanced psychological well-being. The reviewed studies consistently indicate that journaling can be effectively integrated into guidance and counseling services in schools as well as practiced independently as a self-help strategy. Its simplicity, accessibility, and low cost make journaling a practical intervention for supporting adolescents who experience difficulties related to self-image, emotional distress, and social pressure. However, this study is limited by its literature review design and the relatively limited number of studies specifically examining journaling as an intervention for improving self-acceptance. Therefore, future research is recommended to conduct experimental or longitudinal studies involving adolescent girls to further examine the effectiveness of structured journaling interventions and explore their long-term impact on self-acceptance and psychological well-being.

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