

# The Impact of Self-Management Techniques to Improve University Students' Social Cognition

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## Abstract

The background of the current study is the urgency of possessing good social cognition to adapt to the social changes that are happening quickly. Weak social cognition makes individuals less in empathy, aggressive or unhappy in their daily life. The link between self-management and social cognition lies in cognitive adjustment. Hence, the authors think it is important to do research that focuses on the implementation of counseling with self-management techniques in developing social cognition. The authors aimed to investigate the effectiveness of self-management in improving social cognition. The present study used one group pretest-posttest quasi-experiment. We invited 10 students from Universitas Ma'soem, Indonesia to participate in the experiment. They were selected based on a low social cognition score after filling the self-report of nineteen items social cognition scale. The results showed counseling with self-management techniques effective in improving university students' social cognition. Besides, limitations and recommendations are discussed.

## INTRODUCTION

Social media has a huge influence on today's life. Individual lives can be judged fun or vice versa based on social media uploads. For people, especially teenagers, social media is their reference and standard of living. Some teenagers become hyperactive on social media by frequently posting their daily activities that will describe their lifestyles that try to keep up with the times. Within the scope of social media, individuals who get attention, and cultivate imagery can be categorized by self-existence (Nasrullah, 2016; Rakanda, 2020)

Such social life changes if not followed wisely will cause various problems such as cyberbullying, child safety threats, even stress, and frustration. World Health Organization (2019) explained that the new phenomenon affecting adolescent mental health today is due to technological developments and social media. Kelly et al. (2018) surveyed excessive social media use causing symptoms of depression 50%, online harassment 61.3%, low self-esteem 30.7%, weight dissatisfaction 70%, unhappy with appearance 27.2%, and lack of sleep hours 52.7%.

Social cognition needs to be owned by the current generation to adapt to the social changes that are happening. Individuals should be able to understand the surrounding environment including the social environment in cyberspace. Individuals need to realize that each other is a unique individual, whether it concerns his nature, interests, values, or feelings (Mudjiran, 2007; Ranny et al., 2017). Emotional maturity is an important aspect in the development of social cognition.

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The ability to empathize and sympathize with others is an indicator of social cognition maturity. From a Positive youth development perspective, Caring is an expression of sympathy and empathy for others (Lerner et al., 2009; Suryahadikusumah & Yustiana, 2016). This aspect emphasizes on teenagers to be sensitive and care about the social situation they face. Being sensitive means being able to understand the background of a social change, and understand how to put yourself right in the situation.

The challenges faced with the social life of this generation are the tendency of conformity attitudes, namely the tendency to give up or follow opinions, opinions, values, habits, passions, or desires of others (peers). Kilford et al. (2016) found that the success of adolescents facing the transition to adulthood requires rapid refinement and integration of cognitive processes. The process affects many typical adolescent behaviors, such as peer influence and sensitivity to social exclusion, and others.

The correlation between self-management and social cognition lies in cognitive adjustment. A new study shows social cognition plays a role as a resource that can control one's decision-making through perception. Perception, understanding, and interpretation of other people's emotions are fundamental aspects of social interaction and the need for integration of various perception skills, social cognition, and affective (Hidayati, 2018). This is a basic aspect of affective perception, such as perception and emotional recognition, and more complex social cognitive processes, such as the ability to understand the affective state of others, sometimes referred to as affection mentality.

Self-management techniques focus on affective maturity and individual cognition. Yates argues that in such techniques individuals are directed to managing by antecedent and managing by consequence or also referred to as a form of behavioral intervention techniques, which are the implementation of cognitive or affective techniques (Hidayati, 2018; Mudarya & Setiawan, 2016; Setiawan & Dharsana, 2018). Affective techniques in self-management is a program that aims to change one's emotions and attitude towards the situation faced. While cognitive techniques are useful in changing the mind and its patterns. Also, self-management can help teens to manage

### **Rationale of the Current Study**

Based on the findings of previous research, it is estimated that self-management is an important factor in encouraging adolescent social cognition. Self-regulation skills, planning skills, emotional management skills, or definitions of expectation become personal resources developed in self-management techniques. The research aims to prove the significant influence of self-management techniques on social cognition. Previous research has only proven the link between self-management variables and social cognition. In this study, researchers implement self-management as a counseling technique in developing student social cognition.

### **Hypotheses**

1. Self management techniques are effective in developing student social cognition.
2. Self-management techniques are not significantly effective if there is no difference between social cognition before and after being given the self-management technique.

## **METHODS**

### **Research Design**

Quasi-experiment with one group pretest-posttest design was used. The research process focused on one group of experiments by noticing changes in social cognition before and after the self-management counseling process. In the early stages, researchers pre-tested participants to obtain their social cognition profiles, then identified aspects of cognition that

were still weak. The use of self-management techniques is focused on these aspects. In the final stage or reflection of the results of self-management application, researchers conducted post tests on participants.

### Participants

A total of 10 participants (Male = 3, Female = 7; Age M = 18.7) were selected purposively from 30 students of Ma'soem University counseling guidance study program. Based on the results of pre-test measurements the sample had the lowest score and factually lacked in socializing, difficulty understanding the social situation around it, and easily felt anxious when it came to showing itself in an off-campus environment.

### Instruments

The research instrument was adapted from a student social cognition questionnaire developed by Nejadi et al. (2018). The social cognition measuring instrument uses a Likert scale that refers to four social cognition domains. The four social cognition domains developed are mapped in Table 1. The instrument has 19 valid items, with a validity value of .76 and a reliability value of  $\alpha = .8$ .

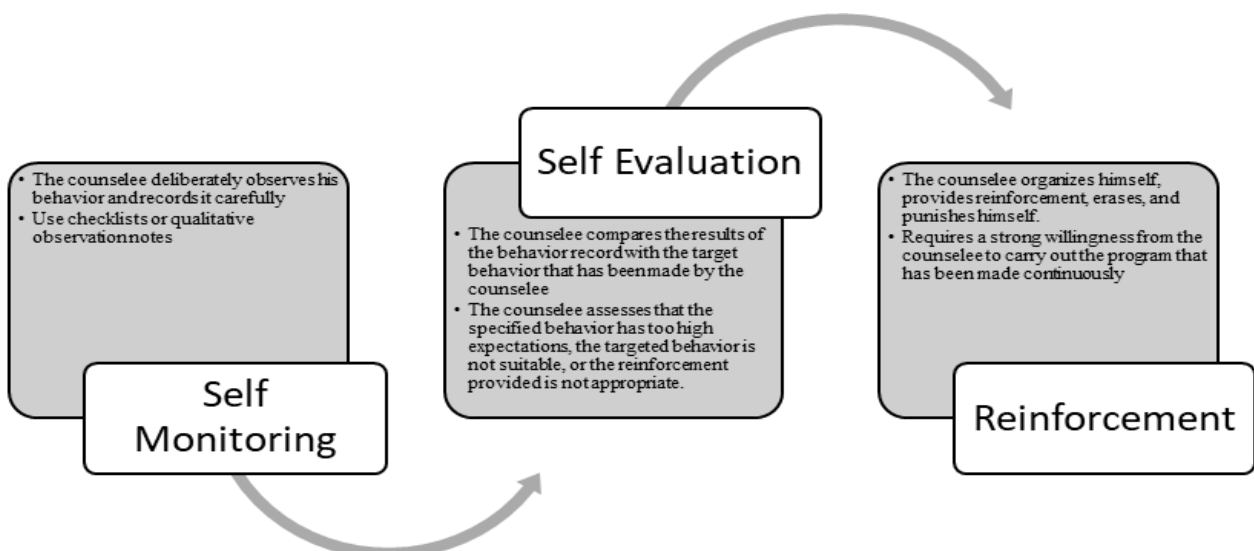
Table 1. Domain of social cognition

Domain	Description
Emotional Perception	The way individuals perceive and use emotional information includes both simple and complex processes. Related to non-verbal communication
Theory of Mind	The capacity to understand the mental state of others. The measured abilities include assessing beliefs, interpreting cues, and the ability to understand metaphors.
Social Perception	Interpret social cues, understand the social environment, and understand situations contextually
Attributional Style	The way individuals interpret, explain, or understand the situation positively, and relate it to the individual's internal and external factors

### Procedures

The framework of self-management technique counseling using three core stages 1) Self-monitoring, 2) Self Evaluation, and 3) Reinforcement. An overview of the framework is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Framework of Self -Management



## Data Analysis

The study used two forms of data analysis, are t-test and N-gain test. T-test used to determine the significant effect of the intervention, while the N-gain test used to analyze the magnitude of the effect of self-management on social cognition.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

Table 2 showed the demographic information of the participants. The demographic informations are the frequency of gender and age of the participants.

Table 2. Participants demographics (N=10)

Variables	F	%
Gender		
Male	3	30
Women	7	70
Age		
18	4	40
19	5	50
20	1	10

In Table 3, the social cognition score obtained by the sample was obtained both before the counseling session and after counseling using self-management. There was a change in score that did not go far between before and after the counseling session.

Table 3. Data Description and t-test (N=10)

Intervention Group	Min	Max	M	SD	t	p
Pretest	51	57	54.20	2.20	5.23	< .05
Posttest	56	69	62.50	4.27		

Based on the data in Table 3, the minimum value obtained by the sample during pre-test = 51, maximum score = 57, average = 54.2, and Std. Deviation = 2.20. In the post-test the minimum value obtained = 56, the maximum score is 57, the average = 62.5, and Std. Deviation = 4.26. Variance post-test scores are more diverse than pre-tests. Significance differences in social cognition in pre-test and post-test analyzed using t-test. The test results are also presented in Table 3 as obtained  $t = 5.2$  and  $p < .05$ . The results show that hypothesis 1 is accepted, in the other had hypothesis 2 is rejected. It means that counseling with self-management techniques are effective in improving university students social cognition.

### Discussion

The results of the study are in line with the research of Safithry & Anita (2019) group counseling with self-management techniques can lower the level of social prejudice, the indicator achieved is the subject will not be too quick to judge others because not necessarily what others are doing is wrong and what we are doing is right. Utami (2017) argues that self-management is an effective method to monitor individual conditions and adapt to maintain or improve the quality of life for the better, based on the results of descriptive analysis seen an increase in the average value of psychological well-being participants after being given self-management ability training.

Group counseling sessions using self-management are focused on controlling the subject's thinking towards their social environment. The subject reassesses his perception of his position in the environment, the environmental responses to his habits, and assesses the emotional responses that arise from him. Changes that are indicators of achievement are

subjects more flexible with personal values, try to understand the situation carefully, and learn to express emotions reasonably. Thus self-management has an impact on the ability to regulate emotions.

The ability to manage emotions is very important because when a child or adolescence can regulate his emotions therefore he will be more productive than children who lack emotional skills. People who are emotionally intelligent or able to manage their emotions have been described as people who are able to adjust well, warmly, sincerely, persistently and optimistically. This is believed to include social and cognitive functions as related to emotional expression (Awaliyah et al., 2019).

Cognitively, the incapableness of managing social perception has an impact on impulsive behavior. Impulsive individuals are characterized by the absence of reflexive control and anticipation of posterior consequences, which leads to the making of errors in certain situations (Dalley et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2016). Emotionally, impulsivity is characterized by a low tolerance to frustration, always feeling dependency, and little control resources to regulate impulses to respond quickly and precisely (Bridgett et al., 2015; Guinote, 2017).

Social impulsivity has been associated with socialization difficulties (Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2017), low empathy (Baldner et al., 2015), prosociality (Do et al., 2017), dependent relationships (Odacı & Çelik, 2016), aggressiveness (Johnson & Carver, 2016), and manipulation (Salekin, 2016). Social cognitive developed through self-management is an effort to improve the ability to understand social situations and stimulate subjects to try to socialize in new ways.

The use of self-management in the development of social cognitive proved effective in reducing aggressiveness. Retnowulan & Warsito's research (2013) described the frequency of juvenile delinquency among groups of students assisted by self-management strategies decreased significantly compared to the group of students who were helped by conventional methods. Nisa's findings (2013) proved that self-management strategies can reduce aggression behavior, from the results of the study it is known that subjects who have high aggression behavior can decrease their aggression behavior, they can monitor themselves, monitor aggression behavior and things that cause aggressive behavior and then control the stimuli of aggressive behavior and then give boosters to themselves not to repeat their aggression behavior.

In the context of Islamic counseling, self-management is identical to the practice of Tazkiyatun Nafs. Tazkiyatun Nafs in counseling is a process of self-recognition (assertive) of weaknesses and self-errors that have been an obstacle to a personal change of a person, thereby undermining the defense mechanism itself, self-introspection in every process, and self-commitment to change and consistent with the reality that must be faced with a new way of his behavior (Alfaiz et al., 2019). Self-management is done by stimulating the individual to understand the wrong thoughts about good and wrong, see himself in-depth, and help the individual form his or her commitment or regulation.

Self-Management Engineering Group Counseling Tazkiyatun Nafsi has a vertical dimension (theistic) that uses the values of tazkiyatun nafsi as a reference in changing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through exercises and habituation packed by way of M.A.B.I.T (Agustin, 2018). Operationally Agustin et al. (2017) outlines the form of self-management in the context of Islamic counseling, among others 1) individuals must be aware of the intention, namely the individual mobilizer to do something, in psychology known as "intention"; 2) habituation of prayer, can give rise to discipline attitudes and can train to be able to focus; and 3) train discipline and train yourself to have the ability to control themselves through fasting.

### Limitations and Sugestions

Research has limitations in both practice sessions and research methods. In counseling sessions using self-management still need supporting interventions to strengthen behavior changes, such as simulating behavior changes or assertive exercises. Further research methods can use single subjects to make behavior changes more clearly described.

### Implications

Research has implications for developing social cognition through self-management. Self-management can stimulate a wiser perspective on social situations that can be faced by students. However, it still needs to be supported by exercise and assignments in the counseling process. Students can be given additional assignments in the form of journaling, assertive training, effective living practices, etcetera.

### CONCLUSIONS

Self-management counseling techniques are effective in improving social cognition. Social cognitive developed through self-management is an effort to improve the ability to understand social situations and stimulate subjects to try to socialize in new ways. In counseling sessions using self-management still need supporting interventions to strengthen behavior changes, such as simulating behavior changes or assertive exercises. Further research methods can use single subjects to make behavior changes more clearly described.

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### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

As the first author, MSH designed research implementation, data collection, and field interventions. MNW provides direction and helps build theoretical frameworks, validates instruments and designs implementation. AJ provided direction and field supervision during the implementation of interventions and data analysis.

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