

## IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING-BASED PSYCHOEDUCATION PROGRAM TO IMPROVE FRIENDSHIP QUALITY AMONG ADOLESCENTS IN AN ORPHANAGE SETTING

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High-quality friendship is important for adolescents living in communal care settings. Preliminary interviews and observations at KK Orphanage showed unresolved peer conflicts, communication misunderstandings, social rejection, and low openness. This study evaluated changes in friendship quality after a Social Emotional Learning (SEL)-based psychoeducation program. A one-group pretest-posttest design was used with eight adolescents aged 14-17 years. Data were collected using the Friendship Qualities Scale before and after 12 intervention sessions covering self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and trust building. The mean score increased from 35.35% to 73.87%, with a 38.52 percentage-point improvement. Field observations also indicated more active interaction, openness, collaboration, and constructive conflict management. These findings suggest that SEL-based psychoeducation may support friendship quality in orphanage settings, although conclusions should be interpreted cautiously because the study used a small sample and no control group.

## INTRODUCTION

Peer relationships occupy a central position in adolescents' psychosocial development. During adolescence, interaction with peers increasingly shapes identity formation, emotional security, self-disclosure, and social adjustment (Tandiono et al., 2020). High-quality friendships may function as protective relationships because they provide companionship, emotional support, validation, and a safe context for social learning. Empirical findings also show that friendship quality is related to adolescents' life satisfaction, self-esteem, optimism, and broader well-being (Putri & Muttaqin, 2022; Luijten et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023). Conversely, friendships marked by exclusion, unresolved conflict, and poor communication can increase vulnerability to psychological distress and maladaptive social behavior (Aulady & Harianto, 2022; Alsarrani et al., 2022). Therefore, strengthening friendship quality is relevant not only as an interpersonal issue but also as a preventive effort to support adolescent well-being.



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The importance of friendship is consistent with Seligman's PERMA model, which conceptualizes well-being through positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Within this framework, the relationship dimension is fundamental because supportive interpersonal bonds contribute to vitality, belonging, and social functioning (Sahin et al., 2024). Cohen and Wills (1985) also emphasized that social support buffers psychological stress through recognition, appreciation, and care. These perspectives indicate that adolescent friendship quality should be treated as a meaningful outcome in psychosocial intervention programs.

Adolescents living in orphanage-based communal care settings may face more complex relational challenges. Daily interaction in a shared living environment can create both emotional closeness and repeated interpersonal tension (Hanifah et al., 2025). Differences in developmental background, cultural experience, family history, and previous traumatic exposure may further influence trust, emotional regulation, and conflict management (Akbar Nur Aziz et al., 2023; Hapsari et al., 2022). Without structured guidance, these conditions can reduce the quality of peer relationships and limit opportunities for healthy social development.

Initial qualitative assessment through interviews and direct observation at KK Orphanage confirmed systemic problems in friendship patterns among residents. Identified phenomena included long-standing interpersonal disputes without concrete resolution, communication distortion, social rejection when attempting to join a group, and withdrawal from social interaction. These symptoms were accompanied by difficulties in expressing emotions, low confidence in speaking publicly, and limited conflict resolution strategies.

The urgency of the problem was reinforced by the pre-test results using the Friendship Qualities Scale (FQS), which showed that the participants' average friendship quality score was 35.35%. The lowest areas were related to companionship and intimacy; help, support, and validation; and conflict resolution. These findings indicate the need for an intervention that strengthens socio-emotional skills as a foundation for more adaptive friendships.

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) was selected as the intervention framework because it develops five core competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Prior studies have shown that SEL-based programs can improve social competence, prosocial behavior, communication quality, relationship skills, and psychological well-being (Durlak et al., 2011; Choquette et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Pollak et al., 2024). However, empirical discussion of SEL-based psychoeducation for adolescents in orphanage settings remains limited. Unlike most SEL discussions conducted in formal school settings, this study focuses on adolescents living in an orphanage-based communal care environment where peer interaction occurs repeatedly in shared daily routines. Accordingly, the novelty of this study lies in applying SEL-based psychoeducation as a contextual psychosocial program to improve friendship quality among adolescents in an orphanage setting. This study aimed to examine changes in friendship



quality among adolescents at KK Orphanage after participating in an SEL-based psychoeducation program.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative one-group pretest-posttest design to measure changes in friendship quality before and after the implementation of an SEL-based psychoeducation program. The design was considered appropriate for an initial community-based intervention evaluation; however, because it did not include a control group, the results should be interpreted as evidence of improvement associated with the program rather than definitive causal proof. The program was conducted at KK Orphanage, North Jakarta, from February to May 2026.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling based on preliminary interviews and observations. The inclusion criteria were adolescents aged 14-17 years, living at KK Orphanage, willing to participate in the full program, and demonstrating relational difficulties such as peer conflict, low openness, or communication barriers. Eight adolescents met these criteria and were included as participants. Ethical procedures were implemented through institutional permission from the orphanage, informed consent from the responsible caregiver or institutional guardian, and participant assent before data collection and intervention activities. Participation was voluntary, participant identities were anonymized using initials, and all responses were treated confidentially. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the activity without negative consequences.

Quantitative data were collected using the Friendship Qualities Scale (FQS), which was culturally and linguistically adapted into the Indonesian context. The adaptation process included translation into Indonesian, adjustment of wording to suit adolescent participants in the orphanage context, and readability checking during preliminary administration. The instrument consisted of 22 statements rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Conceptually, the FQS covers companionship, conflict, help, security, and closeness. In this study, these dimensions were summarized into three analytical pillars: companionship and intimacy; help, support, and validation; and conflict and resolution. Total scores were converted into percentages using the formula: obtained score divided by the maximum possible score (110), multiplied by 100. Higher percentages indicated better friendship quality. Because the sample was small, reliability evidence was interpreted cautiously and should be re-tested with a larger sample in future studies.

The intervention consisted of 12 structured group sessions based on the SEL framework. The materials covered self-exploration, emotional literacy, empathy development, active listening, interpersonal communication, teamwork, conflict management, trust building, and final self-reflection. Sessions were delivered through participatory group methods, including discussion, educational games, behavioral simulation, structured role-play, and debriefing. Pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed using comparative descriptive analysis to determine the direction and magnitude of change in friendship quality after the intervention. In addition, paired pre-test and



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post-test scores were examined using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test because the sample was small and the data were paired. Effect size was estimated using *r* to support interpretation of the magnitude of change.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Pre-test Results of Friendship Quality

Before the SEL-based psychoeducation program was implemented, all participants completed the pre-test using the FQS. This diagnostic procedure was conducted to map the baseline condition of participants' friendship quality and to identify psychosocial needs that should be addressed in the intervention module.

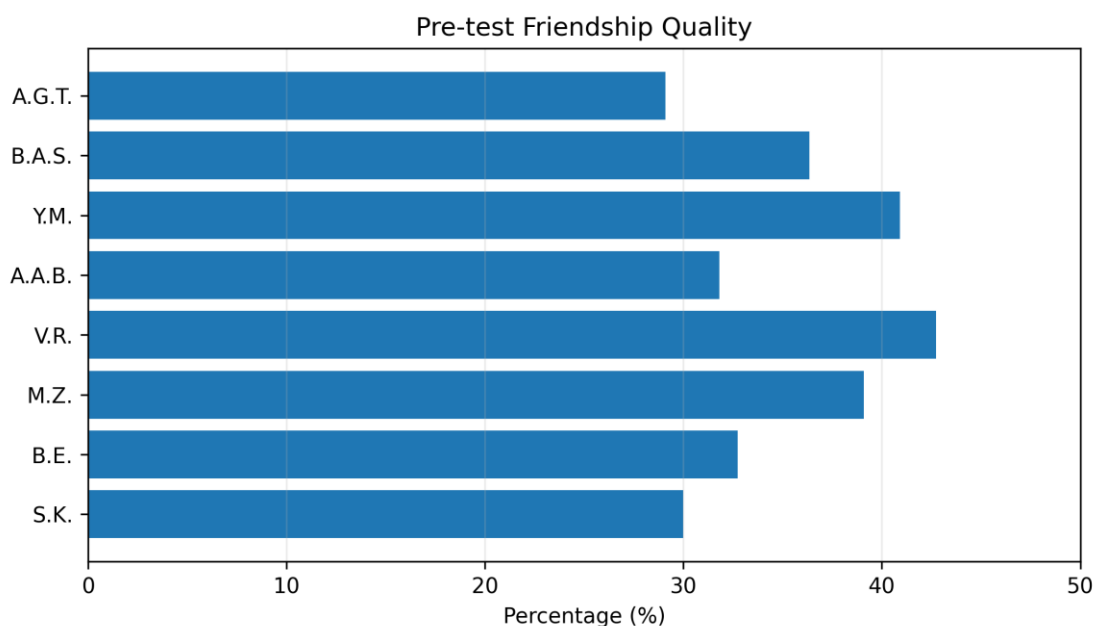
**Table 1. Pre-test Results of Friendship Quality**

Participant	Total Score	Mean	Percentage (%)
A.G.T.	32	1.45	29.09
B.A.S.	40	1.81	36.36
Y.M.	45	2.05	40.91
A.A.B.	35	1.59	31.82
V.R.	47	2.13	42.73
M.Z.	43	1.95	39.09
B.E.	36	1.63	32.73
S.K.	33	1.5	30.0
Average	38.88	1.76	35.35

*Note.* The maximum possible score was 110. Percentages were calculated by dividing each obtained score by 110 and multiplying by 100.

The pre-test results showed that the average friendship quality score was 35.35%, indicating that participants' friendship quality before the intervention was in the low category. Individually, all participants scored below 50%. This finding suggests that important elements of peer relationships, including emotional closeness, social support, interactional security, and conflict resolution, had not yet developed optimally.





**Figure 1. Percentage of Friendship Quality Scale Scores in the Pre-test**

The quantitative pattern was consistent with qualitative data from observations and interviews. Social relationships among adolescents at the orphanage were characterized by unresolved conflicts, communication misunderstandings, social rejection, low self-disclosure, and avoidance behavior. Observational indicators included limited eye contact during group discussion, reluctance to join peers outside familiar cliques, and minimal initiative to begin conversations. Some participants reported that conflicts with peers had lasted for months because neither side initiated reconciliation. This indicates limited constructive conflict resolution skills and a low capacity to restore relationships after interpersonal rupture.

Several adolescents also reported fear of rejection when attempting to join conversations or collective activities. Such experiences increased social anxiety and encouraged participants to limit interaction to only a small number of people they perceived as safe. This condition indicates that social support and interpersonal acceptance had not been well consolidated within the friendship system at the orphanage (Sindiani et al., 2025).

### **Implementation of the SEL-Based Psychoeducation Program**

Based on the convergence of pre-test data, observations, and interviews, the research team developed an SEL-based psychoeducation program to improve friendship quality among adolescents at KK Orphanage. The intervention was designed contextually according to field problems, particularly interpersonal communication barriers, empathy deficits, low self-disclosure, and limited ability to manage social conflict constructively.

Operationally, the program consisted of 12 structured sessions targeting five major socio-emotional competency domains: self-awareness, emotion regulation, social awareness, relationship



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skills, and responsible decision-making. The initial phase strengthened self-awareness through activities such as Finding Myself, Who I Am, and My Strength and Weakness. These activities encouraged participants to understand their identity, personal characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses. During the group process, most participants showed enthusiasm in self-reflection and gradually developed courage to share personal experiences with others.

The next phase focused on emotional literacy and perspective-taking through Emotions 101, Understanding Others, and Empathy Training. Interactive simulations and guided discussions helped participants understand that each person has different feelings, experiences, and perspectives. Participants began to demonstrate more appropriate empathic responses when listening to personal narratives from peers. This finding supports the view that empathy-focused psychoeducation can improve social interaction quality (Sofwana et al., 2020).

Interpersonal communication skills were developed through Listen and Expressing Feelings. These sessions emphasized active listening, accurate interpretation of interpersonal messages, and assertive expression of thoughts and emotions. Observations indicated greater courage among participants to express opinions and share personal memories. Such communication competence is crucial because it supports healthy relationships and reduces interpersonal friction (Sahin et al., 2024).

The consolidation of friendship skills was implemented through Building Friendship, Conflict Resolution, and The Trust Is. Structured group tasks challenged participants to collaborate, build trust, and manage conflict constructively. A notable behavioral change was the expansion of interaction networks among residents, including communication with peers who had previously been avoided. Participants also showed improved ability to manage differences of opinion without withdrawing from interaction.

The final session, Reflecting and Closing, provided space for debriefing and reflection on the transformation experienced throughout the program. Most participants expressed new awareness of assertive communication, empathy, collaboration, and trust maintenance in friendship. Overall, the intervention was conducted in a conducive manner and received positive responses from all participants.

**Post-test Results of Friendship Quality**

After all sessions were completed, participants took the post-test using the FQS. The assessment aimed to identify changes in friendship quality after the 12-session program focusing on self-awareness, emotion regulation, empathy, interpersonal communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and trust building.

**Table 2. Post-test Results of Friendship Quality**

Participant	Total Score	Mean	Percentage (%)
A.G.T.	79	3.59	71.82
B.A.S.	87	3.95	79.09



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Y.M.	80	3.63	72.73
A.A.B.	83	3.77	75.45
V.R.	81	3.68	73.64
M.Z.	79	3.59	71.82
B.E.	81	3.68	73.64
S.K.	80	3.63	72.73
Average	81.25	3.69	73.87

Note. Higher scores indicate better friendship quality after completion of the SEL-based psychoeducation sessions.

The post-test results showed an average friendship quality score of 73.87%, indicating a substantial improvement compared with the pre-test average of 35.35%. In general, all participants demonstrated higher friendship quality after completing the program. The highest post-test score was obtained by B.A.S. at 79.09%, followed by A.A.B. at 75.45%, while the remaining participants also reached relatively high and more evenly distributed scores.

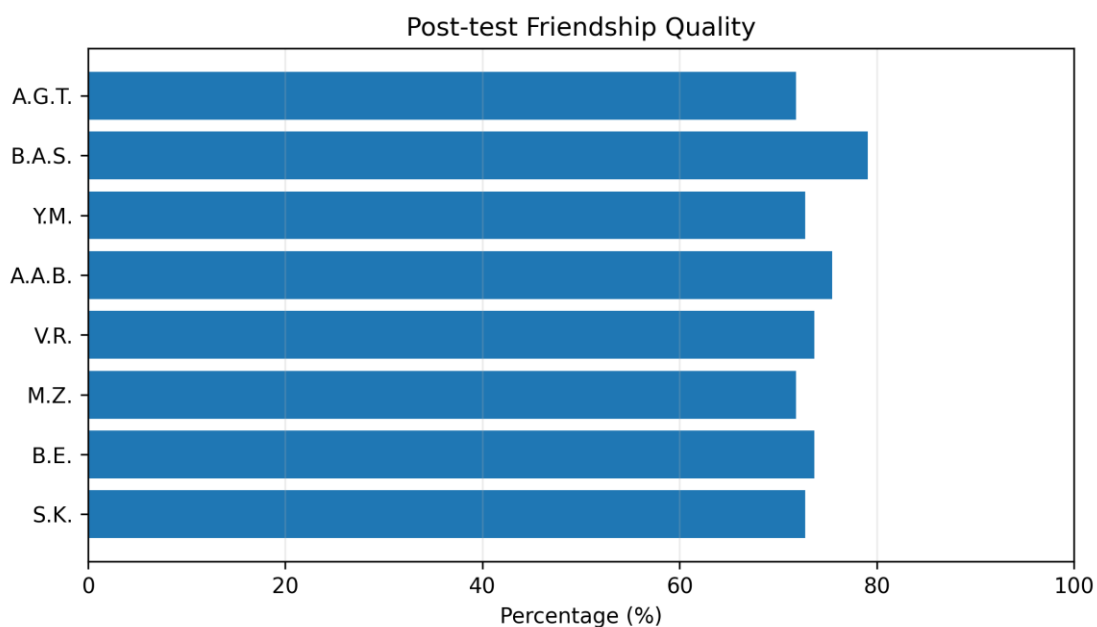


Figure 2. Percentage of Friendship Quality Scale Scores in the Post-test

The increase was particularly visible in companionship and intimacy. Participants became more active in group interactions, more open in communication, and more capable of building emotional closeness. They began to move beyond rigid friendship cliques and initiated contact with peers outside their usual circle. This pattern is consistent with findings that SEL-based programs can strengthen peer connectedness and improve interpersonal relationship quality (Pollak et al., 2024).

Improvement was also observed in help, support, and validation. During group assignments, participants increasingly demonstrated supportive prosocial behavior, willingness to help each other, and appreciation for peers. Positive change was also seen in conflict and resolution, as participants became more capable of managing interpersonal tension, expressing views assertively,



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and reconnecting with peers with whom they had previously experienced conflict. These changes show that the SEL program produced not only numerical score improvements but also observable behavioral transformation.



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### Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Results

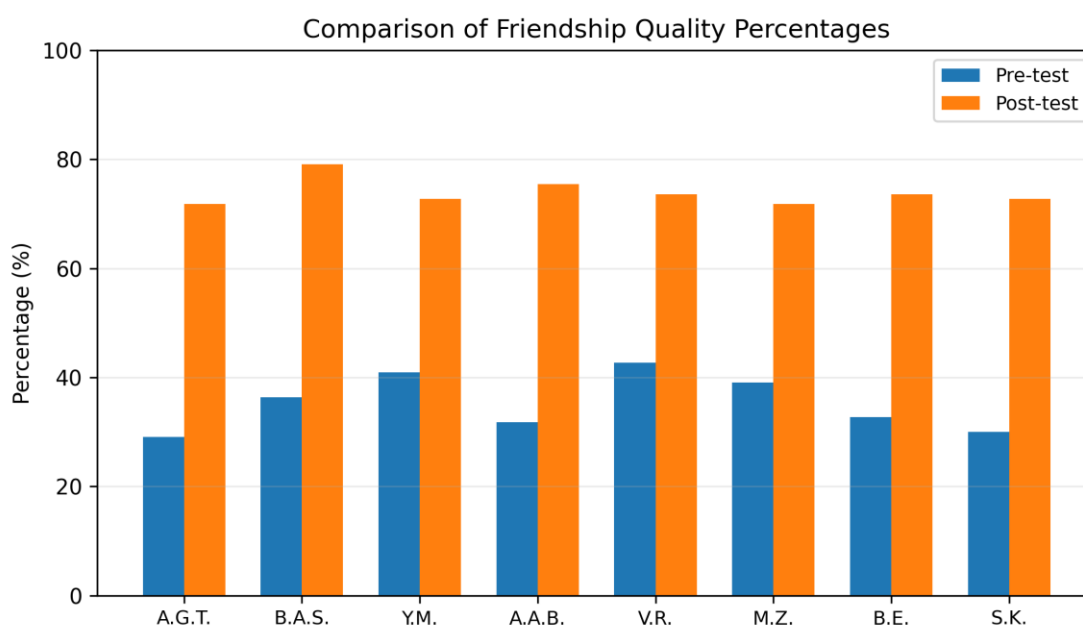
The comparison between pre-test and post-test scores shows an improvement in friendship quality among all participants after completing the SEL-based psychoeducation program.

**Table 3. Comparison of Pre-test and Post-test Results**

Measurement Stage	Average Percentage (%)
Pre-test	35.35
Post-test	73.87
Improvement	38.52

Note. Score categories were interpreted descriptively as low (<50%), moderate (50-69%), and high (>=70%). The improvement of 38.52 percentage points indicates a large descriptive change, while the inferential result should be interpreted cautiously due to the small one-group design.

The average score increased by 38.52 percentage points. This improvement occurred across all participants, indicating a consistent positive change after the intervention. The score increase reflects development in emotional closeness, social support, openness in communication, and adaptive conflict resolution. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that all eight participants had higher post-test than pre-test scores, indicating a statistically significant increase in friendship quality ( $Z = -2.52$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $r = .89$ ). Nevertheless, the absence of a control group means that the improvement should be interpreted cautiously, because maturation, repeated measurement, or contextual factors may also contribute to the observed change.



**Figure 3. Comparison of Friendship Quality Scale Percentages in the Pre-test and Post-test**

The descriptive improvement was reinforced by behavioral observations during the program. Participants showed greater initiative to interact, reduced social anxiety when expressing opinions, and healthier interpersonal closeness with peers. Specific indicators included more frequent



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voluntary responses in group reflection, willingness to work with peers outside usual friendship circles, and attempts to reconnect with peers after role-play-based conflict resolution activities. Based on the convergence of quantitative data and field observations, the SEL-based psychoeducation program can be considered a promising strategy for improving friendship quality among adolescents at KK Orphanage.

### Limitations and Implications

This study provides initial evidence that SEL-based psychoeducation is associated with improvement in friendship quality among adolescents in an orphanage setting. However, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study involved only eight participants, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the one-group pretest-posttest design cannot fully rule out alternative explanations for the observed improvement. Third, reliability evidence for the adapted instrument should be strengthened through item-level analysis and Cronbach's alpha testing in future studies. Fourth, the study did not report follow-up measurement, making it difficult to determine whether the improvement was maintained over time.

For practical implementation, orphanage managers and facilitators may use SEL-based sessions as a structured psychosocial support program, particularly for adolescents who experience peer conflict, low openness, or limited communication skills. For future research, larger samples, control or comparison groups, reliability testing, and longer follow-up periods are recommended to improve methodological rigor and publication readiness for accredited national journals.

### CONCLUSION

The evaluation of the SEL-based psychoeducation program at KK Orphanage indicates a positive improvement in friendship quality among adolescents. This improvement was demonstrated by the increase in the average FQS score from 35.35% at pre-test to 73.87% at post-test, with an absolute improvement of 38.52 percentage points. The Wilcoxon signed-rank result also supported a significant increase in paired scores. However, the finding should be interpreted as an improvement associated with the intervention rather than definitive causal evidence because the study did not use a control group. The change reflects development in emotional closeness, social support, openness, trust, and conflict resolution skills.

The quantitative findings were supported by field observations showing visible behavioral changes among participants, including increased initiative in social interaction, greater courage in self-disclosure, stronger group collaboration, and more positive peer relationships. Therefore, SEL-based psychoeducation may be positioned as a practical intervention strategy for strengthening socio-emotional competence among adolescents living in orphanage-based communal care settings. Future studies should involve larger samples, comparison groups, follow-up measurement, and clearer reporting of instrument reliability to strengthen the evidentiary quality of the findings.



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