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SEMINAR: 'KNOW YOURSELF, PROTECT YOUR FUTURE' AT STATE ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL 1 PALANGKA RAYA

Abdul Syahid¹

Abdul.syahid@iain-palangkaraya.ac.id

Maisarah²

maisarah.tbi.iain@gmail.com

Cahaya ningrum³

cahayaningrum400@gmail.com

Diar Mukti Asri⁴

diarmukti68@gmail.com

Nur Lutfiah⁵

fiascourse@gmail.com

Rahmahdalena Putri Khairunnisa⁶

rmhdlnaputri@gmail.com

Abstract

The seminar "Know Yourself, Protect Your Future" held at State Islamic Junior High School 1 Palangka Raya aims to provide students with an understanding of the importance of self-

¹ Lecturer, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching, English Language Education Study Program, UIN Palangkaraya

² Student, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching, English Language Education Study Program, UIN Palangkaraya

³ Student, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching, English Language Education Study Program, UIN Palangkaraya

⁴ Student, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching, English Language Education Study Program, UIN Palangkaraya

⁵ Student, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching, English Language Education Study Program, UIN Palangkaraya

⁶ Student, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teaching, English Language Education Study Program, UIN Palangkaraya



awareness and self-care. This is especially important considering their age, which is a transitional period from childhood to adolescence, during which curiosity about the outside world increases. This seminar activity is expected to educate students about dangers they should avoid early on, such as free association, drugs, bullying, and others. Moreover, this study also aims to guide students in discovering their interests and talents as a first step in planning a more focused and meaningful future. The seminar was conducted using an interactive and reflective approach, involving active student participation through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and encouraging students to reflect on their feelings and experiences to better understand themselves. One session of the seminar included critical listening, directed towards thought-provoking questions that indirectly encouraged students to think critically in answering them. At the end of the seminar, each student was invited to make a personal commitment about the things they should do for a better future.

Keywords: *self-awareness, future, free association, drugs, bullying, critical listening, critical thinking, commitmen.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a transitional phase from childhood to adulthood, marked by various changes such as physical, psychological, and social development. During this stage, adolescents tend to have a strong curiosity about their surroundings. However, they are not always able to distinguish clearly between what is good and what is harmful. Without proper guidance, this curiosity may lead them toward negative behaviors such as promiscuity, drug abuse, and bullying. This highlights the importance of early intervention and character development.

The role of education and guidance becomes crucial not only from parents and teachers, but also from the wider community. Therefore, we, students of the State Islamic Institute of Palangka Raya, took the initiative to organize a seminar entitled “Know Yourself, Protect Your Future” at State Islamic Junior High School 1 Palangka Raya. This seminar aimed to raise awareness about the importance of self-understanding and self-protection from an early age, as well as to help students discover their potential and personal identity.



Through this activity, we hope the students not only gain new knowledge, but also undergo a learning process that encourages deeper self-awareness. We want them to understand who they truly are, to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, and to realize that every choice they make today will significantly impact their future.

More than just an ordinary seminar, we aimed to create a memorable experience one that inspires students to think ahead and stay motivated to grow into better individuals. The commitments they made at the end of the seminar were not mere promises written on paper, but rather a symbolic beginning of their serious intention to shape their future direction. In this way, we hope the seminar can serve as a meaningful stepping stone for students in their journey of self-discovery and in preparing for a brighter, more purposeful future.



B. RESEARCH METHOD

This activity employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. This approach was chosen to provide an in-depth description of the seminar implementation process and to understand students' responses, comprehension, and experiences throughout the activity. The seminar was conducted in person during the event titled "Know Yourself, Protect Your Future" at State Islamic Junior High School 1 Palangka Raya.

The seminar applied interactive and reflective approaches as its main strategies. The interactive approach was implemented through group discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and other participatory activities that encouraged active student involvement. Meanwhile, the reflective approach aimed to guide students in exploring their personal experiences, emotions, and values related to self-identity and their future. One form of reflective activity included a session on critical listening, followed by thought-provoking questions and a personal written commitment at the end of the seminar.

Data were collected through participant observation, documentation (photos, videos, and field notes), and students' written reflections. The observations aimed to record students' engagement and responses during the seminar. The students' reflections were analyzed to identify their understanding of the material and the emergence of self-awareness after the seminar.

The data were analyzed qualitatively and descriptively by illustrating patterns of participation, content of student reflections, and the effectiveness of the approaches used. The findings are expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the seminar's contribution to the development of students' self-awareness and the direction of their future.



C. DISCUSSION

WHAT DO YOU WANT IN THE FUTURE?

A person who has hope tends to be more consistent and persistent in completing tasks they have started, even when faced with various challenges. They remain committed to their goals and dreams and are able to maintain the motivation to achieve them. When one path is blocked, they will seek alternative ways to reach the future they envision. Several studies have shown that hope has an impact on attendance. People with a high level of hope are usually less likely to be absent compared to those with low hope. This also applies to productivity the higher a person's hope, the greater their achievements tend to be.

In addition, hope is strongly linked to happiness. Having hope for the future often encourages individuals to adopt a healthy lifestyle and avoid habits that may cause illness. Therefore, people with a high level of hope generally experience better quality of life and have a greater potential for longevity than those who lack hope.⁷



⁷ Shane J. Lopez, MAKING HOPE HAPPEN, Virginia Favel EADM 892.3, November 23, 2018, page 3



The concept of hope is closely related to aspirations, as they both reflect a vision or goal someone wants to achieve in the future. Hope is not merely a feeling of optimism; it is also a source of motivation that drives individuals to set and pursue their life goals despite obstacles. Therefore, the question “What do you want in the future?” is not just about asking what students want in life, but is actually an attempt to explore and understand their hopes for the future. This question is important because it helps students become more aware of and articulate their aspirations or goals more clearly. Moreover, this process encourages self-reflection and critical thinking about the steps they need to take in order to achieve those hopes. Thus, asking about the future is not only a way to discover students’ desires, but also a means to build a strong foundation of hope that can influence their attitudes and behaviors in pursuing their dreams.



This activity was designed to ensure that students are not merely passive listeners, but actively engaged in the learning sessions. Active participation is considered essential as it enhances students' understanding and emotional connection to the material presented. In this context, students were not only encouraged to answer questions about their future, but also motivated to express their aspirations openly through group discussions. One form of participation involved matching English vocabulary related to professions with their Indonesian equivalents. This activity not only enriched students' vocabulary but also stimulated their critical



thinking in understanding and linking word meanings to relevant careers. Through this approach, language acquisition becomes not just a matter of memorization, but also contextual and meaningful for their lives.

Moreover, the activity helped students imagine various possible careers for their future, while encouraging them to identify their interests and personal potential more clearly. By learning about different professions, students began to set long-term goals and plan concrete steps towards achieving them. This seminar was not only intended to explore students' desires through reflective questions, but also served as a platform to build strong hope. Such hope plays an important role in shaping their attitudes and behaviors in the learning process. When students have a clear vision for their future, they tend to be more motivated, consistent, and persistent in pursuing their life goals. Therefore, a simple activity such as matching vocabulary related to professions can have a significant impact on developing students' spirit and direction for their future lives.

KNOWING YOURSELF: GUIDING TEENAGERS TROUGH SELF- AWARENESS IN A TIME OF CHANGE

A crucial era in human development, adolescence is characterized by significant changes in the body as well as in emotions, relationships, and identity. It is the time between childhood and maturity. Young people start to ask more in-depth inquiries about themselves at this time:





Who am I? How do I feel? Where am I heading?

However, a lot of teenagers experience these changes without fully comprehending what's going on inside. Confusion, insecurity, and susceptibility to harmful influences can result from this lack of self-awareness. Adolescents can be better equipped to face the future with more clarity and confidence if they are given the opportunity to get to know themselves, including their feelings, strengths, and dreams.

1. Understanding Adolescence and Inner Change

People between the ages of 13 and 19 are referred to as “teenagers.” This period is characterized not just by age but also by a variety of personal changes that impact how teenagers feel, think, and engage with the outside world. Teenagers' self-perception and interactions with the outside world are also influenced by a number of significant physical, cognitive, emotional, and social changes. Adolescents start to develop their own identities, values, and goals throughout this stage, frequently while overcoming obstacles including peer pressure, emotional instability, and a need for independence. Their behavioral patterns, emotional reactions, and mental processes are all greatly impacted by these alterations. Adolescence is a period of greater emotional intensity and introspection during which people begin to consider their place in society and plan for the future, claims Santrock (2019).⁸

a. Physical changes

Adolescence's physical development is among its most obvious features. Teens go through hormonal changes, growth spurts, body shape changes, and puberty. For a lot of people, this includes new physical sensations, vocal changes, and acne.

⁸ Santrock, John W., Adolescence (17th Edition), McGraw-Hill Education, 2019



Teenagers who are still getting used to their changing bodies may find these physical changes overwhelming or perplexing, even if they are quite typical from a biological perspective. When comparing themselves to friends who might be developing at a different pace, many teenagers experience increased self-consciousness or even anxiety regarding their appearance. Their confidence may be impacted by these worries, particularly in social situations like public events or school.

For this reason, it is crucial to provide a setting that makes teenagers feel secure and comforted. They must be made fully aware that there is no “right” or “wrong” timeframe for physical development and that everyone develops at their own pace.

b. Emotional changes

Adolescents have substantial emotional development as well. Their emotions grow stronger, more nuanced, and occasionally erratic. They might have more intense feelings of happiness, rage, despair, or worry than they did previously, but they may find it difficult to express them. This emotional instability is a natural byproduct of growing up. Teens can better regulate their emotions with greater knowledge and empathy both toward themselves and others by learning to identify and label their emotions.⁹

2. Encouragement of Self-Expression

Language is an effective instrument for introspection. Teens' comprehension of their own emotions and identities is deepened as well as their communication skills are improved when they are encouraged to express themselves. These simple expressions invite honesty and

⁹ Santrock, John W., Adolescence (17th Edition), McGraw-Hill Education, 2019

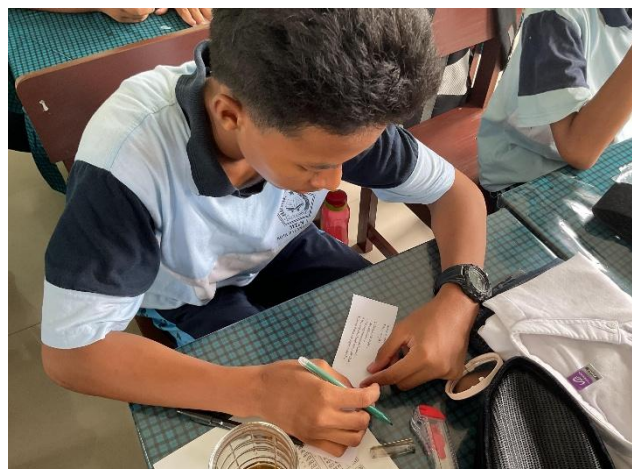


introspection. As teens learn to speak about their inner experiences, they also learn to listen to themselves—an essential part of growing emotionally and intellectually.¹⁰

Teens were helped to relate their feelings to actual circumstances. By learning new emotional vocabulary such as excited, nervous, sad, angry, and happy, they were able to better articulate what they were feeling in different situations. Writing down emotions serves as a tool for self-discovery in addition to language acquisition. Teens learn to stop, think, and become more conscious of their inner emotional world with this program.

3. A Reflective Exercise: “This is Me” Self-Description

To assist students in exploring and expressing their identities in a more concentrated and



approachable manner, a written self-description exercise was employed as an alternative to visual mind mapping. Participants were asked to write a brief self-evaluation in basic English on a piece of paper as part of this reflective practice. Although the activity's structure was simple, its

¹⁰ Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), The CASEL Guide to Schoolwide SEL, 2020



purpose was profoundly significant: to promote self-awareness, boost vocabulary proficiency in English, and offer a secure environment for individual expression.

Students were instructed to write down simple yet intimate details like their name, interests, and favorite foods, colors, or subjects in school, as well as their fears, dreams, and personal qualities. Some children, for instance, identified as “helpful” or “kind,” while others expressed anxieties like “I’m afraid of the dark” or aspirations like “I want to be a teacher”. These straightforward statements gave students the opportunity to think about their identities and priorities in addition to practicing English sentence formation.

Students were better able to identify their own feelings, passions, and potential by putting these elements into words. Adolescence is a time of rapid identity growth and emotional insight, making this type of introspection very beneficial. Additionally, using English to articulate their ideas gave them a useful and empowering learning experience that combined language proficiency with introspection.

Despite using merely printed text and basic paper, the activity had a big impact. This kind of activity allows teenagers to reflect on what makes them unique. Students can think about what makes them special.

RECOGNIZE THE DANGERS OF NEGATIVE SOCIALIZING

Adolescence is a very important transition period in a person’s life. At this time, teenagers are very vulnerable to the influence of their social environment and peers. They often want to be accepted by their friends and start to form their own identity. However, not all influences from their social environment are positive. Negative peer influences can be a serious threat to the physical, mental, and future development of teenagers. Negative behaviors like drug



abuse, free sex, and bullying not only harm health and morals but can also destroy teenagers' dreams and future if not recognized and avoided early.



1. Types of Negative Peer Influences and Their Impacts

a. Drugs

Drugs often enter teenage environments through peer invitations or curiosity to try. Social pressure makes many teenagers find it hard to say no, even just once.¹¹ However, trying drugs even once can lead to addiction, which is very hard to stop. The effects of drug addiction are large, including health problems, dropping out of school, broken family relationships, and legal issues. Also, drugs can slow down the development of the teenage brain, which is still growing.

b. Free Sex

¹¹ Sussman, S., & Ames, S. L. (2008). *Drug Abuse: Concepts, Prevention, and Cessation*. Cambridge University Press.



It is normal for teenagers to feel attraction and love. But without good understanding and self-control, this can lead to free sex behavior.¹² Free sex at a young age has high risks, such as unplanned early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and psychological trauma that can cause stress and mental disorders. It is important for teenagers to understand healthy boundaries in relationships and learn to manage their feelings wisely.

c. Bullying

Bullying is a form of negative behavior where someone intentionally hurts or scares others, physically, verbally, or through social media (cyberbullying).¹³ Bullying can cause victims to suffer serious psychological stress, like depression, anxiety, and withdrawing from social life. In severe cases, bullying can lead to suicide. Therefore, bullying must be recognized and stopped early so teenagers can grow up in a safe and supportive environment.



2. Factors Causing Teenagers to Fall into Negative Peer Influence

¹² Kaestle, C. E., & Allen, K. R. (2011). *The role of emotional relationships in adolescent sexual behavior*.

¹³ Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J. W. (2010). *Bullying, cyberbullying, and suicide*. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 14(3), 206-221.



Teenagers often want to be seen as cool by their friends and fear being left out if they say no to certain behaviors. This need to fit in makes it hard for many to refuse when friends invite them to do things that are harmful. Many teens have low confidence and do not fully understand what is good or bad. ¹⁴Peer pressure plays a big role, as friends encourage risky or negative behaviors. These pressures, combined with lack of self-awareness, make teens more likely to get involved in negative activities.

3. Strategies to Avoid Negative Peer Influence

a. Know Yourself

Self-awareness is essential for resisting negative peer pressure. When teenagers clearly understand their values, personal goals, and what they stand for, they are more empowered to reject harmful behaviors. This inner clarity acts as a protective factor, helping teens maintain their identity despite external pressures.

b. Choose Good Friends

The social circle a teenager surrounds themselves with greatly influences their behavior. Positive friends provide support, encouragement, and healthy examples. Choosing friends who respect one's boundaries and share similar goals reduces the risk of being drawn into negative activities.

c. Learn to Say "No" Firmly

Developing assertiveness skills is crucial. Teens should practice ways to decline invitations or pressures without feeling guilty or fearing social rejection. Clear, confident refusals can help maintain friendships while protecting one's well-being.

d. Maintain Open Communication with Family

¹⁴ Steinberg, L., & Monahan, K. C. (2007). Age differences in resistance to peer influence. *Developmental Psychology*, 43(6), 1531–1543.



Strong family relationships act as a safety net. Parents, guardians, and teachers who maintain open and supportive communication can guide teenagers through challenges and offer advice when facing peer pressure. Feeling understood and supported reduces the likelihood of risky behaviors.

e. Fill Time with Positive Activities

Engagement in extracurricular activities, sports, hobbies, and community events provides meaningful alternatives to negative peer influences. Staying busy with constructive interests not only builds skills and self-esteem but also reduces opportunities for involvement in harmful behaviors.

4. Be Wise, Choose Right

Being a teenager means standing at the starting point that shapes one's future. Every decision made today, no matter how small, can have a long-term impact on the direction of life. Therefore, it is crucial for adolescents to realize that youth is not the time to try harmful things just to be seen as “cool” by others, but rather a valuable phase to build strong character, values, and life goals. Choosing supportive friends, a healthy social environment, and engaging in positive activities are the first steps toward a brighter future. Teenagers should be motivated to become independent individuals who are not easily influenced by outside pressure and who take full responsibility for their choices. By developing self-awareness and the ability to make wise decisions, adolescents can grow into mentally strong individuals, capable of facing challenges and contributing positively to society. As Nurmi (2004) explained, future orientation and clear planning during adolescence are strongly associated with achieving meaningful and well-directed life goals in adulthood.¹⁵

¹⁵ Nurmi, J.-E. (2004). Socialization and self-development: Channeling, selection, adjustment, and reflection. In R. M. Lerner & L. Steinberg (Eds.), *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology* (pp. 85–124). Wiley.



CRITICAL THINKING ON CYBERBULLYING

One of the seminar's highlights was a session led by Nur Lutfiah, which focused on cyberbullying—an increasingly relevant issue among teenagers in the digital era. The session began with a short, light ice-breaking moment, asking students whether they use social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube, and if they have ever witnessed or experienced negative comments or online bullying.

The purpose was to create a relaxed yet honest atmosphere, making it easier for students to relate to the topic. Following this, a short three-minute video was played, illustrating two teenagers discussing the emotional impact of cyberbullying and what individuals can do to prevent or respond to it. The video served as a powerful visual context to spark reflection and discussion.

After the video, students were encouraged to think critically through a series of guided questions: “Why do you think people bully others online?”, “What might the victims feel?”, and “If someone says it’s ‘just a joke’ but it hurts, is it still a joke?” These questions were designed to go beyond surface-level reactions, prompting students to consider the deeper emotional and ethical implications of online behavior. One or two students were invited to share their thoughts, fostering a safe space for open dialogue. According to Willard (2007), increasing adolescents’ awareness and equipping them with decision-making skills is key to building digital resilience.

The session concluded with practical strategies that students could apply in their daily digital lives: Think before you post, support victims with kind comments instead of staying silent, and remember the “three steps” if being bullied; Block, Report, and Tell a trusted adult. A key quote from the video was emphasized: “We never know what someone else is going through.



So it's better to choose kind words." The importance of kindness and self-control online is reinforced by Patchin and Hinduja (2015), who found that supportive digital behavior contributes to healthier self-esteem and social connectedness among adolescents.

This session effectively connected emotional intelligence with digital literacy. By promoting digital empathy and encouraging students to be mindful of their online behavior, the seminar reinforced the message that protecting one's future also means protecting one's digital self and contributing positively to others' experiences online. It was a concrete example of how critical thinking—defined as reflective and reasoned judgment (Paul & Elder, 2008)—can be used to address real-life issues and empower adolescents to act with awareness and compassion.

A PROMISE TO MYSELF TO TURN REFLECTION INTO ACTION

At the end of the "Know Yourself, Protect Your Future" seminar held at Islamic Junior High School 1 Palangka Raya, students were encouraged to make a commitment to themselves as a form of value appreciation and dedication to the future. Although seemingly simple, this personal pledge writing activity is a significant first step in the process of thinking deeply about themselves, their values, and the kind of life they want to build. According to Erikson in (1968), adolescence is a crucial phase when one struggles with self-discovery, a process known as identity versus role confusion. This requires deep reflection in order for individuals to bring together the various aspects of their self-view across different facets of life. In this context, making a commitment to oneself can be seen as a step towards building one's identity and practicing self-regulation.¹⁶ This is the skill of controlling one's feelings and actions to align with one's goals (Zimmerman, 2000). Every promise has a strong meaning and message. Because change starts with each of us. (Make Space for Growth, 2023).

¹⁶ Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and Crisis*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.



Making a commitment to oneself is crucial because writing it down allows students to formulate an understanding of values, determine what is most important in life, and design concrete actions for change. This activity serves as a tool for reflection and motivation. The consciousness of making commitments clarifies goals, increases the sense of internal responsibility, and serves as a reminder of what you want to achieve in life. According to the OECD (2021), one of the crucial skills for the 21st century is student agency, which refers to the ability of students to “take initiative, make choices and take responsibility for them.” In other words, personal commitment is a clear reflection of strengthening student agency.¹⁷

A small promise but a big impact. Some examples of pledges students wrote in the seminar activity “I pledge to be more confident when speaking in front of the class.” Although seemingly simple, each pledge demonstrates a unique and personal process of self-assessment. In the words of Tomasulo (2022), “hope becomes real when it turns into intention and personal commitment.” And this is exactly what happens when students record a commitment to themselves. Making commitment the first step towards change, the personal pledge writing activity in this seminar serves not only as a time for reflection, but also as a transition from understanding to action. Through pledge setting, students are taught to build self-confidence, or the belief that they can manage their actions and choices in life. (Bandura, 1997). Dweck (2023) refers to this as an element of a growth mindset, which is “believing that change can happen, and that one's efforts are the means to achieve it.” UNESCO MGIEP (2021) highlights the value of social-emotional education in shaping individuals with self-awareness and a sense of responsibility. This personal commitment is a simple exercise of self-awareness that is essential for social and academic life.

¹⁷ OECD. (2021). *Future of Education and Skills 2030: Student Agency for 21st Century Learning*. Paris: OECD Publishing. <https://www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/>



Fulfilling commitments and projecting tomorrow. A promise to yourself is not a perfect imperative, but a journey to better recognize and guide yourself. This simple step can develop discipline, accountability, and a clear vision in life. As Duckworth and Gross (2022) put it, “self-control exercised in earnest, when motivated by ideals and principles, determines long-term success.” Even the simplest promise to oneself can be the starting point of a remarkable transformation.

CONCLUSION

The “Know Yourself, Protect Your Future” seminar effectively encouraged students to reflect on themselves, recognize their values, and commit to building a better future. Through interactive discussions and reflective activities, students became more aware of the impact of their choices and the importance of protecting themselves from negative influences. The final activity writing a personal promise helped students internalize what they learned and turn reflection into meaningful commitment. As Tomasulo (2022) stated, “*Hope becomes real when it turns into intention and personal commitment.*” This practice empowered students to take responsibility for their actions and future. In conclusion, the seminar succeeded not only in raising awareness but also in guiding students to make small yet powerful decisions for their growth. It presents a practical model of character education that fosters self-awareness, responsibility, and long-term motivation.





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