

Development of a psychological well-being scale for at-risk adolescents

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Abstract

Background: Psychological well-being plays a crucial role in adolescent development, particularly among those facing risks related to family, social, economic, or academic conditions. **Objective:** This study aimed to develop and test the validity and reliability of a psychological well-being scale tailored for at-risk adolescents in Indonesia. **Methods:** A quantitative research design was employed. Content validity was assessed by seven expert raters, resulting in 13 items meeting the Aiken's $V \ge 0.75$ criterion. Reliability analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.830, indicating strong internal consistency. **Results:** These results demonstrate that the scale has acceptable psychometric properties, making it suitable for assessing psychological well-being among adolescents at risk. **Conclusion:** The findings highlight the practical value of providing a culturally relevant measurement tool to support psychologists, counselors, and researchers in conducting assessments and designing interventions that promote well-being in vulnerable youth.

Keywords: Psychological well-being; at-risk adolescents; scale development; validity; reliability

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INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a dynamic period of development, marked by significant biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes [1]. At this stage, individuals begin to build their identity, face environmental pressures, and adapt to various social demands. According to Yusuf [2], adolescents have unique characteristics that can make them more vulnerable to psychological issues, especially when environmental support is suboptimal. Thus, psychological well-being is considered an important indicator for understanding adolescents' ability to cope with developmental challenges and social risks. One important indicator in understanding adolescent development is psychological well-being. Ryff [3] and Ryff and Keyes [4] define psychological well-being as an optimal state in which individuals accept themselves, build positive relationships with others, master their environment, develop themselves, have life goals, and demonstrate autonomy. This concept emphasizes the positive functions of human, differing from traditional approaches that focus more on the absence of psychopathological symptoms.

At-risk adolescents are a particular focus of developmental psychology research. The term "at-risk adolescents" refers to individuals who experience certain environmental conditions or life experiences that increase their likelihood of facing psychosocial problems. The category of at-risk adolescents can be divided into several groups. The category of at-risk adolescents can include several groups. Adolescents who have had contact with the law, for example, those who are in juvenile detention centers or have committed crimes, show a certain vulnerability. Research by Dewi and Taufik confirms that resilience plays an important role in helping them cope with social pressure [5]. Firdasannah's research at LPKA Bandung shows that theft behavior in adolescents is related to environmental factors and parenting styles [6]. Further research shows that adolescents' perceptions of their parents' parenting styles also shape their behavioral dynamics [7].

These two findings emphasize the need for specific instruments to understand the psychological well-being of adolescents who have encountered problems with the law. Another group is adolescent victims of bullying. Triana et al. reported that the majority of adolescents involved in bullying at SMP 1 PGRI Jatinangor showed low psychological well-being (56%), with the highest scores in the positive relationships dimension and the lowest in self-development [8]. A similar condition was also experienced by adolescents living in orphanages. Lestari et al. reported that life experiences and limited social support affect their psychological well-being. In addition, adolescents from dysfunctional families also face high risks [9]. Dewi and Purwandari showed that family harmony, social integration, and locus of control are closely related to the psychological well-being of children in conflict with the law [10]. Another category of at-risk adolescents is those who experience domestic violence.

Research by Oktoji and Indrijati reveals that coping strategies have a significant relationship with psychological well-being in adolescents who are victims of domestic violence [11]. These findings further expand our understanding that psychological well-being is influenced by complex negative experiences. This condition shows that at-risk adolescents tend to be more vulnerable to psychological well-being decline than adolescents in general. In comparison, research by Asih et al. on the dynamics of psychological well-being among adolescents in East Java found that the majority of adolescents were in the fairly good to high category, with no significant difference between males and females [12]. This means that there is a gap between general adolescents and at-risk adolescents, with the latter group facing more severe psychological challenges. Egan et al.'s [13] confirms that social support is one of the

important predictors of psychological well-being in adolescents. This means that PWB measurements in at-risk adolescents must consider the dimension of social relationships in more detail. Adolescents from broken homes are considered at risk because they often face obstacles in forming their identity and psychological well-being. Elvinawanty et al. [14] showed that gratitude training effectively improves the subjective well-being of adolescents from broken homes in Medan. These results confirm that efforts to improve psychological well-being need to consider the vulnerability of the family. In addition to family factors, psychological vulnerability can also be linked to self-regulation abilities. Suputra et al. [15] found that self-compassion training was able to improve self-control in children in conflict with the law. These results show that measuring the psychological well-being of at-risk adolescents is important for assessing the extent to which they have the adaptive capacity to cope with stress.

Psychological well-being is an important indicator for assessing the extent to which adolescents are able to survive, thrive, and find meaning in life under stressful conditions. Therefore, accurate measurement is essential. The Ryff Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) instrument has been widely used in various countries. However, a number of studies have criticized its structural consistency. Belled-Blasco and Alsinet show that Ryff's six-dimensional model often does not correspond with empirical results, and in their study, only four dimensions were found to be more stable [16]. This has sparked debate about the reliability of the PWBS when used across cultures and populations. The Indonesian context shows that adaptation of the PWB instrument has already been carried out, for example, by Raihana et al, who developed the PWB scale within the family context [17]. However, to date, there has been no psychological well-being scale specifically designed to measure the condition of at-risk adolescents, especially those who have had contact with the law.

The research on the social adaptation of adolescents who have had contact with the law emphasizes the need for a deep understanding of the psychosocial factors that support their well-being [18]. Additionally, the research by Dewi et al. on family psychological well-being from a gender and education perspective also highlights the importance of the family context in the formation of PWB [19]. In Indonesia, there have been endeavours to develop instruments to assess psychological well-being in adolescents. Sunardy et al. adapted and validated a short Psychological Well-Being scale for adolescents (BSPWB-A) [20]. While this instrument is indeed practical for assessment purposes, its focus remains on the general population. Consequently, the program does not target adolescents who are particularly vulnerable.

In summary, these findings underscore the necessity of developing specific instruments to understand the psychological well-being of at-risk adolescents in Indonesia. Based on the above description, the purpose of this study is to develop a valid and reliable psychological well-being scale for use with at-risk adolescents in Indonesia. This scale is expected not only to strengthen the developmental psychology literature but also to be used practically in assessment, counseling intervention, and evaluation of rehabilitation and social reintegration programs for adolescents facing psychosocial challenges.

METHODS

Study design and setting

This study uses a quantitative approach with an instrument development design. The main objective of this design is to produce a psychological well-being scale that is appropriate for the context of at-risk adolescents in Indonesia.

Participants

Participants were determined using purposive sampling techniques. The research participants were adolescents categorized as at-risk groups, namely those who had experience with the law, were involved in deviant behavior, or experienced social vulnerability.

Instruments

The initial psychological well-being scale consists of 50 items compiled based on Ryff's six-dimensional theory and Ryff and Keyes' theory (3,4), namely self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, life purpose, self-development, and autonomy. The items were also modified from the psychological well-being scale developed by Raihana et al., which has been used in a family context (17). The items were formulated as statements using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Favorable items were scored directly, while unfavorable items were scored inversely.

Validation procedure

Quality testing of the developed instrument was conducted through several stages of analysis. The first stage was content validity testing, which involved seven expert raters with backgrounds in developmental psychology, psychometrics, and education. The experts assessed the extent to which the items were consistent with psychological well-being indicators, and the results were calculated using Aiken's V index with a minimum threshold of 0.75 (21). Items that scored below this criterion were considered unrepresentative and were eliminated from the scale.

Criterion validity testing was conducted in the next stage using item-total correlation analysis. This technique aims to assess the extent to which each item has a distinguishing power on the overall scale score. Items were declared to meet the criteria if the item-total correlation value was above 0.30 (22); only items that had a significant contribution to the psychological well-being construct were retained. The final stage is reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This reliability assesses the internal consistency between items on the scale. The interpretation of the coefficient refers to the guidelines of George and Mallery, where a value above 0.80 indicates excellent reliability (23). The results of this analysis confirm that the developed scale is not only valid in terms of content and criteria, but also consistent in measuring the construct of psychological well-being

Statistical analysis

The data were analyzed using statistical software. Aiken's V value was used to determine item suitability based on expert assessment analyzed using Microsoft Excel. Item-total correlations were analyzed to assess the discriminative power of the items, and internal consistency reliability was calculated to assess the reliability of the instrument using Jamovi software.

Ethical conciderations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta (Approval No. 4142/B.1/KEPK-FKUMS/III/2022).

RESULTS

Content validity and criterion validity

Content validity testing of the initial 50 items showed that 20 items had an Aiken's V value above 0.75 (V = 0.79-0.93) and were therefore declared valid, while the other 30 items were eliminated because they were below the minimum threshold of 21. The next step is to test the validity of the criteria using item-total correlation analysis. The results of the analysis show that 7 items have a correlation value below 0.30 and are therefore rejected (22). Thus, the instrument consists of 13 items that meet the validity criteria and are ready for use in the next stage. The following is a table of the results of the validity criteria for the psychological well-being scale for at-risk adolescents. All items showed a significant correlation with the total score (p < 0.001), with correlation values ranging from 0.325 to 0.593.

Table 1. Results of the criterion validity of the psychological well-being scale

No.	Item Code	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
1	KP1	0,431	< 0,001
2	KP2	0,430	< 0,001
3	KP3	0,551	< 0,001
4	KP4	0,429	< 0,001
5	KP5	0,452	< 0,001
6	KP6	0,536	< 0,001
7	KP7	0,593	< 0,001
8	KP8	0,413	< 0,001
9	KP9	0,471	< 0,001
10	KP10	0,521	< 0,001
11	KP11	0,528	< 0,001
12	KP12	0,353	< 0,001
13	KP13	0,325	< 0,001

Realibility and item distribution

The reliability test results showed an α value of 0.830, indicating excellent internal consistency. The distribution of the 13 items that passed the criterion validity is shown in the following table 2. The validated and reliable instrument consists of 13 items with a 5-point Likert scale. Table 3 shows the psychological well-being scale for at-risk adolescents.

Table 2. Item distribution based on psychological well-being aspects

Acnost	Indicator	Item	Total	
Aspect	mulcator	Favorable	Unfavorable	Total
Self-	Accepting oneself as one is	6	0	0
acceptance	and being confident	6	2	2
Environmental	Being able to manage and	4 10		0
mastery	solve problems in daily life	4, 13	_	2
Positive	Having warm, empathetic,			
relationships	and mutually supportive	3, 11	9	3
with others	relationships with others			

Acnost	Indicator	Item	Total		
Aspect	indicator	Favorable	Unfavorable	- Total	
Life purpose	Having a clear direction in life	5	-	1	
Self- development	Feeling that you have the potential to grow and the enthusiasm to face challenges	7, 10	-	2	
Autonomy	Having self-control so that you are not easily influenced by others	1	8, 12	3	

Table 3. Psychological well-being scale for at-risk adolescents

	Statement	Response Options				
No		1	2	3	4	5
1	Saya tidak memikirkan komentar negatif orang lain meskipun hal tersebut menyakiti hati saya					
2	Saya tidak yakin dengan kesuksesan masa depan saya karena saya tidak memiliki banyak kemampuan					
3	Saya sukarela mengikuti aktivitas di lingkungan sekitar, seperti gotong royong					
4	Saya menyadari dan memahami penyebab permasalahan yang saya hadapi					
5	Memiliki rencana masa depan akan membantu dalam mewujudkan tujuan hidup					
6	Saya merasa bersyukur dengan kehidupan saya saat ini					
7	Saya merasa memiliki bakat atau keterampilan yang dapat saya gunakan untuk bekal masa depan saya					
8	Saya akan marah kepada orang yang memberikan komentar negatif kepada saya					
9	Saya tidak mau berkumpul bersama teman, walaupun tugas saya sudah selesai					
10	Setiap masalah yang saya hadapi adalah titik awal dari setiap keberhasilan saya					
11	Saya berusaha menghibur teman dekat saya yang sedang tertimpa masalah					
12	Saya sering merasa takut apabila keputusan yang saya ambil tidak tepat					
13	Saya mampu menyelesaikan tugas tanpa bantuan teman					

Remarks: questions in Indonesian

DISCUSSION

The results of this study are relevant when compared to the findings of several previous studies. In general, adolescents show a relatively high level of psychological well-being. Previous studies show that adolescents in East Java aged 12 to 18 generally have good

psychological well-being. However, groups of adolescents who have experienced certain negative experiences show different results [12]. In addition, the majority of adolescents involved in bullying cases actually have low levels of psychological well-being [8].

International research also shows that crisis conditions have a major impact on the psychological well-being of adolescents. Christner et al. found that during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany, children experienced a decline in psychological well-being accompanied by an increase in problematic behavior [24]. These findings can be seen as parallel to the conditions of at-risk adolescents who face significant environmental pressures. In Indonesia, research by Mahendika and Sijabat confirms that social support, coping strategies, resilience, and self-esteem are important factors that contribute to the psychological well-being of high school adolescents [25]. These findings are in line with the results of this study, which emphasizes psychological well-being as a multidimensional construct influenced by internal and external factors.

Intrapersonal factors such as the ability to forgive have also been proven to be relevant. Sujatmi and Qodariah found that forgiveness was significantly related to psychological well-being in adolescents living in orphanages [26]. These findings support one of the important dimensions in Ryff's model, namely positive relationships with others, which is a crucial aspect for at-risk adolescents. This comparison confirms that there are significant differences between general adolescents and at-risk adolescents, making the development of instruments appropriate to the context of vulnerability increasingly important.

In addition, research in orphanage settings also provides an interesting picture. Research on adolescents in orphanages also reinforces these findings. Ningsih and Hazim show that limited social support in the orphanage environment has an impact on the psychological well-being of adolescents [27]. These results are in line with the findings of this study, which emphasizes the importance of measuring psychological well-being contextually according to the vulnerability conditions of adolescents. Lestari et al. developed a psychological well-being scale for adolescents in orphanages consisting of 37 items. The instrument describes the complexity of adolescents' psychological experiences in a foster care environment [9]. Compared to previous studies, the scale developed in this study is more concise, with only 13 items. Although shorter, this scale still covers the six main aspects of Ryff's framework, making it potentially more efficient for use in assessments with at-risk adolescents.

Furthermore, this study also complements the findings obtained in previous works by the authors. Dewi and Taufik emphasize the importance of resilience as a protective factor for children in conflict with the law [5]. Meanwhile, Dewi and Purwandari show the role of family harmony, social integration, and locus of control in supporting the psychological well-being of at-risk adolescents [10]. From a methodological perspective, the development of psychological well-being instruments for adolescents has been carried out by Abidin et al., who compiled the PWB scale for adolescents aged 12–15 years. However, this instrument still focuses on the general population [28]. The main difference with this study is its orientation towards at-risk adolescents, so that the instruments developed can be more sensitive to the dynamics of their psychological vulnerability.

Previous research has focused on external and internal factors as protective factors, while this study adds to the contribution by providing a direct measurement instrument for psychological well-being. Thus, the results of this study not only enrich the literature but also provide practical tools that can be used for assessment,

intervention, and evaluation of rehabilitation programs for at-risk youth. The results of the study indicate that the developed scale has good psychometric qualities, including content validity, criterion validity, and adequate reliability. This instrument broadens the understanding of the application of Ryff and Keyes' psychological well-being model [4] in the context of at-risk adolescents.

From a theoretical perspective, this study reinforces the literature on the importance of measuring psychological well-being in vulnerable groups. Practically, this concise and applicable scale can support rapid assessment processes in schools, rehabilitation institutions, and counseling services. The limitations of this study include the small sample size, the lack of CFA and test-retest validation, and the focus on a single cultural context. Further research is recommended to expand the sample size, validate the construct, and test cross-cultural applicability.

CONCLUSIONS

This study successfully developed a psychological well-being scale for at-risk adolescents that has been proven to be valid and reliable. The final scale consists of 13 items representing six dimensions of psychological well-being according to Ryff and Keyes. This instrument not only contributes to the developmental psychology literature in Indonesia but also has practical benefits in the assessment and intervention of atrisk adolescents. Thus, this scale can serve as a basis for developing more effective rehabilitation and prevention programs for adolescents facing social and legal challenges.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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DECLARATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE USE

We hereby confirm that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools or methodologies were utilized at any stage of this study, including during data collection, analysis, visualization or manuscript preparation. All work presented in this study was conducted manually by the authors without the assistance of AI-based tools or systems.

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