

# THE INFLUENCE OF GRATITUDE AND SELF-ESTEEM ON PSYCHOLOGICAL HELP-SEEKING BEHAVIOR IN VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENTS

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## Abstract

The behavior of seeking psychological help shows a sign of mental health in adolescents. Seeking psychological help is influenced by various things, including gratitude and self-esteem. With gratitude, students appreciate the benefits of social support for their problems, and with self-esteem, they will raise defenses to solve their problems. This study examines the effect of gratitude and self-esteem on psychological help-seeking behavior in vocational high school students in Boja District, Kendal Regency. The population of this study was 2,504 students, and with the cluster sampling method and the calculation of the Isaac and Michael formula, 333 students were selected as the research sample. The method used in this study is a quantitative approach of correlational design with multiple regression analysis. The study results obtained an f-test score of 74.383 with a sig of 000, meaning H1 is accepted. Gratitude and self-esteem simultaneously affect 31.1% of psychological help-seeking behavior and have a significant and positive relationship. So, it can be interpreted that the higher the level of gratitude and self-esteem in students, the higher the level of help-seeking behavior.

**Keywords:** gratitude, self-esteem, psychological help-seeking, vocational students, mental health.

## Introduction

Among the many parties that have a role in adolescents' mental and emotional health, schools are the ones that play a role in developing and maintaining it. Apart from adolescents spending more time in the school environment, the school is a place and means for students in mental and self-potential development. (Kuswadi, 2019). The school sector's mental and emotional development programs are facilitated by guidance and counseling services, which have preventive and curative services. Guidance and Counseling Services help students in various ways, from achieving developmental tasks, helping to maintain a mentally healthy condition, maintaining a positive outlook, and learning basic life skills (Permendikbud RI, 2014).

Regarding mental health in the school sector, according to a research report from Indonesia - National Adolescent Mental Health Survey (2022) Based on the primary caregiver's statement, the counseling service provider most adolescents accessed in the past 12 months was mental health services provided by schools. However, only 2.6% of all adolescents experiencing mental health problems used school-based counseling services for emotional and behavioral problems. Barriers for adolescents to seek psychological help include a need for more information on where to seek psychological help, as well as preferring to self-manage their problems. (Center for Reproductive Health, University of Queensland, & Johns Bloomberg Hopkins School of Public Health, 2022).

Seeking psychological help is a study based on the theory of planned behavior. The theory of planned behavior is very effective for analyzing health-related behavior. According to Azjen (in Yelpeze & Ceyhan, 2020) This theory of planned behavior is indirectly influenced by subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, and attitudes, which affect intentions together. However, among these factors, personality traits tend to be important determinants in identifying psychological help-seeking behavior. This is because the typical emotions, thoughts, behaviors, attitudes, and habits of individuals are manifestations of their personality traits. (Kumcagiz, 2013; Yelpeze & Ceyhan, 2020).

There is a predictor of psychological well-being that has a strong criterion, namely gratitude. When a person's gratitude is high, that person will have control over their life, have a purpose in life, develop personally, and accept their condition. A sense of gratitude in an individual makes the individual use adaptive coping in seeking social support, looking at experiences, and determining a plan for solving the problems faced. (McCullough, Tsang & Emmons in Listiyandini dkk., 2020). In research conducted by Yelpeze & Ceyhan (2020) revealed that important factors influence seeking psychological help, namely the coping strategies individuals apply to deal with problems. In this case, gratitude is a form of good coping strategy in dealing with situations that cause pressure or stress(Listiyandini dkk., 2020).

In Topkaya's research (2021), self-esteem is an important variable that influences psychological help-seeking behavior and is closely related to psychological well-being. However, in previous research conducted by Gürsoy & Gizir (2019)Self-esteem is not a variable that significantly predicts attitudes toward seeking psychological help because, in this study, self-stigma, social stigma, subjective pressure, and gender are predictors. Meanwhile, the potential for experiencing self-esteem problems is formed from the perception of social stigma and discrimination against people with mental disorders, making prospective help seekers internalize negative information and fear of being labeled as people with mental disorders. This study aims to determine the factors that influence psychological help-seeking behavior in vocational students.

In previous studies, researchers examined several factors, ranging from gender, culture, coping strategies, and personality, to understand the influence of psychological help-seeking behavior. For this reason, it is recommended that the important variables behind psychological help-seeking behavior be examined separately (Yelpeze & Ceyhan, 2020). Therefore, researchers will research to prove the influence of gratitude and self-esteem, which are personality traits related to psychological well-being in seeking psychological help. The research conducted has an impact on guidance and counseling (BK), where the variable under study, namely psychological help-seeking behavior, includes psychological attributes inherent in individuals. Based on the Standar Kompetensi Kemandirian Peserta Didik (SKKPD) (Kemendikbud, 2016), students need psychological help-seeking behavior to achieve developmental tasks, namely aspects of emotional maturity in solving their problems. SMK students in their developmental stage are in adolescence. They are expected to find self-identity, establish good and positive relationships with people in their environment, express emotions correctly, and not disturb others. Adolescence is a transition period from childhood to adulthood, triggering a high risk of psychological problems due to increased responsibility and changes in their lives (Shabrina & Hartini, 2021).

The study results will benefit counseling teachers in carrying out the function of understanding in the personal and social fields. Students' reluctance to seek psychological help is a form of personal field problems in students, which can certainly influence other fields. Students who have issues related to mental health will have difficulty doing things that are following the expectations of the family, teachers, and the community environment (Kuswadi, 2019)

## Method

This study uses quantitative research correlational design with multiple regression analysis techniques. This research design uses a multivariate correlational approach that measures or investigates relationships in three or more variables. (Ibrahim et al., 2018). The purpose of this approach is to evaluate and understand the level of relationship that exists between the variables under study without being affected by external conditions. The population in this study were vocational high school students in Boja District in the 2023/2024 academic year, totaling 2,504 students. The sample in this study amounted to 333 students who were taken using the cluster sampling method. This study uses three psychological scales compiled and developed by researchers based on the theory of each psychological concept: the gratitude scale (24 items) from Watkins' theory, the self-esteem scale (40 items) from Coopersmith's theory, and the psychological help-seeking behavior scale (28 items) from Rickwood's theory with Likert model scale. The validity test results for the gratitude scale get a value range of 0.238-0.648, self-esteem scale values of 0.229-0.610, and psychological help-seeking behavior scale range of 0.175-0.545. The reliability test results of the gratitude scale obtained results of 0.852, a self-esteem scale of 0.854, and help-seeking behavior of 0.736. Variable data collection uses a questionnaire instrument, which will be distributed via Google Forms. The contents of the instrument are a set of statements that represent each specific indicator on each variable to obtain information from respondents. The Likert scale measures data analysis requirements through the Normality Test, Linearity Test, Multicollinearity Test, and Heteroscedasticity Test. The results of the analysis with multiple regression can be seen in the result section.

## Result and Discussion

In this study, researchers conducted a quantitative descriptive analysis to examine the gratitude, self-esteem, and help-seeking behaviors among vocational school students in the Boja District of Kendal Regency seeking psychological assistance. The descriptive analysis revealed notable findings for each of these variables. Specifically, the average gratitude level among the students was categorized as high, with a mean score (M) of 73.65 and a standard deviation (SD) of 9.99. Similarly, self-esteem was also categorized as high, with an average score of 116.94 and a standard deviation 12.97. In contrast, the students' help-seeking behavior for psychological support fell into the medium category, as indicated by an average score of 66.58 and a standard deviation of 7.80.

These results, categorized based on descriptive statistical analysis, were obtained through SPSS version 26, allowing researchers to interpret each variable's data systematically. Further details on the descriptive statistics for gratitude, self-esteem, and help-seeking behavior are outlined in Table 1, providing a more detailed breakdown of each variable's distribution and central tendency.

**Table 1. Results of Analysis Descriptive**

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Category
Gratitude	333	73,65	9,99	High
Self-esteem	333	116,94	12,97	High
Psychological Help-Seeking Behavior	333	66,58	7,80	Moderate

As detailed in the methodology section of the study, several key conditions must be met for conducting parametric tests in multiple linear regression analysis. These

conditions include the presence of normality, including the presence of linearity, the absence of multicollinearity, and the absence of heteroscedasticity. A series of tests were conducted to evaluate whether these conditions were satisfied, and the results are presented in Table 2.

The normality test was performed to assess whether the data followed a normal distribution, and the results indicated that all the data examined met the assumption of normality, confirming that the data set followed a normal distribution pattern. Additionally, the linearity of the relationships between variables was tested, and the significance value of the linearity test for all variables was found to be 0.000. This result strongly suggests that the data-maintained linearity, meaning that a straight line, a necessary assumption for multiple linear regression analysis, could describe the relationships between the variables.

To examine multicollinearity, a test was conducted to ensure that the variables were not highly correlated with each other, which could affect the reliability of the regression results. The results of the multicollinearity test revealed no significant issues, as indicated by the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value of 1.542. Since this value is well below the critical threshold of 10, it confirms no multicollinearity among the tested variables. Finally, the analysis also included a heteroscedasticity test, which is important to ensure that the variance of errors is constant across all levels of the independent variables. The heteroscedasticity regression analysis for the gratitude variable produced a regression coefficient of 0.689, while the significance level for self-esteem was 0.957. These findings indicate no evidence of heteroscedasticity, meaning the variability of the errors remains consistent throughout the data.

**Table 2. Classical Assumptions**

No	Classical Assumptions	Sig	Decision
1	Normality	0,200 > 0,05	Normal
2	Linearity	0,00 < 0,05	Linear
3	Multicollinearity	1,542	No multicollinearity
4	Heteroscedasticity testing on the gratitude variable	0,689	No heteroscedasticity
5	Heteroscedasticity on the self-esteem variable	0,957	No heteroscedasticity

Referring to the data presented in Table 2, each conditional analysis was reviewed and adjusted as necessary. Following this, the researchers proceeded with regression analysis to evaluate their hypotheses regarding the influence of gratitude and self-esteem on the behavior of seeking psychological help. The results from the multiple regression analysis indicated that the significance value of 0.000 was less than the threshold of 0.05, suggesting that the findings were statistically significant. Additionally, the correlation coefficient (R) value obtained was 0.577, indicating a "moderate" but significant relationship between the independent variables, gratitude and self-esteem, and the dependent variable, the behavior of seeking psychological help.

Furthermore, the coefficient of determination (R Square) for the self-esteem variable about help-seeking behavior was 0.311. This means self-esteem accounts for 31.1% of the variance in psychological help-seeking behavior. In comparison, the remaining 68.9% of the variance is influenced by other factors or variables not included in the analysis.

**Table 3. Results of Multiple Regression Test**

Variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	$\beta$	t	p<0,05
(Constant / $\alpha$ )				26,457		
Gratitude				0,166	3,563	0,000
Self-esteem	0,577	0,311	74,393	0,239	6,649	0,000

The findings of this research indicate that gratitude and self-esteem significantly and positively impact the behavior of seeking psychological help. This is reflected in the positive regression coefficients, suggesting that as students' levels of gratitude and self-esteem increase, so does their tendency to seek psychological help. Therefore, it can be concluded that gratitude and self-esteem, when considered together, positively and significantly influence the psychological help-seeking behavior of vocational school students in Boja District.

Drawing on Rickwood's theory (2005, 2012), which emphasizes the role of adaptive coping strategies. This study suggests that these strategies play a critical role in student's decision to seek psychological help. According to the theory, students who engage in adaptive coping behaviors are more likely to reach out for assistance when facing unresolved mental health issues. This process involves seeking help from others and recognizing that they cannot resolve their problems independently.

Rickwood's model also highlights that students with higher levels of psychological help-seeking behavior tend to have greater access to social support networks, such as family members and friends, providing them with more opportunities to seek assistance. In contrast, students with lower help-seeking behavior may demonstrate more passive tendencies when reaching out for help, limiting their access to support and resources.

Gratitude plays an essential and influential role in seeking psychological help. When students experience gratitude, they are more likely to recognize and appreciate the significant roles others play in helping them navigate and resolve their problems. Gratitude fosters a positive mindset, allowing individuals to see beyond their challenges and acknowledge the contributions of others who support them. This appreciation increases the willingness to receive assistance from others, such as guidance and counseling teachers, family members, or peers. By acknowledging the positive impact that others can have on their well-being, students are more likely to reach out and accept the help they need, ultimately promoting their mental health and personal growth.

Siegel's research (2016) Emphasizes that gratitude is strongly linked to an individual's behavior in seeking psychological help. His findings suggest that individuals who cultivate gratitude tend to have a more positive outlook on life and are more likely to seek support when facing challenges. Gratitude encourages individuals to recognize the positive events and contributions in their lives, which can lead to a greater openness to receiving support from others. This openness can extend to seeking professional help, as students who feel grateful are more willing to acknowledge that they need assistance and are more likely to act on that need. Therefore, cultivating a sense of gratitude is beneficial for personal well-being and plays a key role in an individual's readiness to seek out psychological support when necessary.

Further research by Thi et al. (2023) Reinforces the idea that gratitude has a positive influence on seeking professional help. Their study highlights that individuals who experience gratitude generally have better psychological health, engage in healthier behaviors, and are more willing to seek help when faced with difficulties. Grateful individuals are more likely to recognize their need for support and act on it, ultimately leading to better mental health outcomes. The work of Szczesniak et al. (2022) Further supports this notion, which found a positive relationship between gratitude and help-

seeking behavior. Specifically, their research concluded that individuals with higher levels of gratitude are more likely to seek help when needed, as their grateful mindset encourages them to reach out to others for assistance. In this sense, gratitude fosters emotional resilience and strengthens an individual's ability to seek the support they need for mental and emotional well-being.

In addition to a high level of gratitude, the behavior of seeking psychological help is also significantly influenced by the level of a student's self-esteem. Students with high self-esteem are more likely to feel confident in their abilities and have a stronger sense of competence. This self-assurance makes them more open to seeking help when needed, as they believe that asking for assistance does not diminish their value or capabilities. On the other hand, students with low self-esteem may struggle with feelings of inadequacy, often perceiving their need for help as a sign of weakness or incompetence. Such students may feel embarrassed or ashamed about their condition, fearing that seeking psychological help will lead to negative judgments from others, especially their peers. This lack of confidence and fear of social stigma can prevent them from seeking the support they need.

This aligns with the views expressed by Rickwood (2005, 2012), who argued that students with low levels of help-seeking behavior tend to believe that asking for help reflects incompetence. As a result, these students often adopt a passive approach to addressing their psychological issues, avoiding help-seeking behaviors altogether. This passivity can become a barrier, leaving them unprepared to seek assistance in the future, even when they may desperately need it. The reluctance to seek help due to low self-esteem can perpetuate a cycle of isolation and emotional distress, reinforcing the need for a greater understanding of the importance and benefits of seeking help. When students understand that seeking psychological assistance is not a reflection of weakness or incompetence but a proactive approach to maintaining mental health, they may be more inclined to ask for help when necessary.

Coopersmith's (1967) theory provides further insight into this dynamic by suggesting that seeking help can defend one's self-esteem. When students seek help in the face of challenges, they demonstrate the competence and resilience to protect their self-esteem from potential threats and shield themselves from negative evaluations by others. In this context, asking for help is not a sign of incompetence but rather a way of maintaining one's dignity and emotional well-being. This idea further supports the notion that self-esteem and gratitude positively influence a student's behavior in seeking psychological help. High self-esteem encourages students to seek support without fear of judgment. In contrast, gratitude fosters a mindset that values assistance from others, contributing to a more proactive approach to mental health care.

The findings of this research are consistent with the results of previous studies, such as Topkaya's research (2014) This concluded that self-esteem plays a significant role in influencing the behavior of adolescents seeking psychological help. This study reaffirms that self-esteem notably impacts students' willingness to seek psychological support. The results suggest that higher self-esteem leads to more proactive help-seeking behavior, as students with greater self-confidence are more likely to reach out for assistance when facing mental health challenges. This aligns with the research conducted by Afifah and Nasution (2023), which emphasizes that enhancing students' self-esteem improves their behavior in seeking psychological help. According to their findings, self-esteem is a critical component of an individual's sense of identity, shaping their belief in their ability to handle problems. Students with higher self-esteem are more likely to perceive themselves as capable of managing challenges, making them more open to seeking help than struggling alone. This highlights the importance of fostering self-esteem to encourage healthy help-seeking behaviors among students.

The analysis of the three variables in this study reveals that the correlation coefficient of determination (R Square) for the self-esteem variable about behavior in seeking psychological help is 0.311. This indicates that self-esteem influences 31.1% of students' psychological help-seeking behavior. In contrast, other external variables account for the remaining 69.9% of the variance in this behavior. These findings suggest that both gratitude and self-esteem play a significant role in influencing students' willingness to seek psychological help. However, the research also indicates that these two factors are not the sole determinants of help-seeking behavior.

Several other factors can also affect whether students seek psychological help. These include individual personality traits, prior experiences with receiving help, self-stigma, and community stigma, as well as various coping strategies, gender, occupation, and place of residence. Previous studies by Kumcagiz (2013), Maba et al. (2023), O'Connor et al. (2014), and Topkaya (2021) have highlighted the importance of these external and personal factors in shaping help-seeking behaviors. These variables can either facilitate or hinder a student's decision to seek psychological support, underlining the complex and multifaceted nature of help-seeking behavior.

Based on the findings and explanations provided, guidance and counseling teachers play a crucial role in enhancing students' behavior in seeking psychological help. These professionals can significantly influence students' willingness to seek support by focusing on developing key factors such as gratitude and self-esteem. Counseling teachers can achieve this by incorporating specific indicators of gratitude and self-esteem into their counseling services. This would help students recognize the value of seeking help when facing psychological challenges. Additionally, counselors can assist students in gaining positive experiences while dealing with their psychological issues, further encouraging them to seek the necessary support in the future.

Several prior studies have explored effective interventions to increase gratitude and self-esteem, essential for fostering healthier help-seeking behaviors. These interventions have proven successful in improving students' psychological well-being, enhancing their confidence, and making them more open to seeking assistance. By integrating these strategies into counseling practices, guidance teachers can help students build the resilience and emotional strength required to address mental health challenges, ultimately supporting their long-term psychological growth and well-being.

Increasing gratitude in students can be achieved through various approaches such as psychoeducation focused on positive psychology, gratitude training, seminars, and reflective activities encouraging teenagers to recognize and appreciate the positive aspects of their lives. These methods have been highlighted in studies by Jannah (2022), Rahma & Cahyani (2023), and Togatorop (2024), who suggests that such activities can help students develop a more grateful mindset. By fostering gratitude, students are more likely to adopt a positive outlook, which, in turn, can influence their behavior in seeking psychological help when necessary.

Teachers can implement various strategies to effectively develop gratitude, guidance and counseling, including classical services, group guidance, or group counseling. These services can be structured to help students reflect on and recognize the value of positive aspects of their lives, enhancing their ability to seek help when needed. Additionally, interventions aimed at increasing self-esteem have been explored in previous research. One effective approach is self-instruction training, as suggested by Lestari (2014), which helps students develop positive self-talk and build their self-confidence. Another method involves positive thinking training, which Marwati et al. (2016) It is found to be effective in boosting self-esteem and promoting healthier behaviors.

Guidance and counseling teachers can use various techniques to facilitate these interventions. For instance, group guidance services can incorporate sociodrama, as suggested by Zamzanah et al. (2023). It helps students role-play different situations to understand themselves and others better, fostering self-esteem and emotional awareness. Additionally, individual counseling services can be enhanced using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach, as recommended by Ikbali and Nurjannah (2017). This approach helps students address irrational thoughts and beliefs, promoting healthier thinking and improving self-esteem. Using these diverse techniques, guidance and counseling teachers can effectively support students in increasing their gratitude and self-esteem, ultimately encouraging positive help-seeking behaviors.

This research has various limitations, despite the researchers who have tried their best to conduct it. However, with these limitations, it is hoped that in the future, it will help researchers research similar topics so that it is complete and more perfect. The limitations of this study include the following: This study uses quantitative methods to determine the effect of the variables of gratitude and self-esteem on psychological help-seeking behavior, which requires further research to prove the cause and effect between variables through experimental research. The study was conducted on a population of vocational high school students, so the results of the study cannot be generalized to other broader levels of education.

Future researchers are expected to make this limitation a reference for more perfect research. Future researchers can prove the effect of gratitude and self-esteem on psychological help-seeking behavior using experimental methods. In addition, future researchers can use the causality method by considering intervening or moderator variables taken from aspects or indicators of the gratitude and self-esteem variables, such as appreciation of others, aspirations, and defenses, to know which indicators most influence psychological help-seeking behavior. Future researchers can use data collection tools proportional to the number of items in each indicator or try to use adapted instruments or instruments from recent research to obtain more comprehensive data in describing gratitude, self-esteem, and psychological help-seeking behavior. Further, researchers can conduct research with research populations at other levels of education so that it can be generalized.

## Conclusion

The research findings indicate a significant positive relationship between gratitude, self-esteem, and the behavior of seeking psychological help among vocational school students in Boja District, Kendal Regency. Specifically, the research shows that students with higher levels of gratitude and self-esteem are more likely to engage in help-seeking behavior when faced with psychological challenges. Conversely, students with lower levels of gratitude and self-esteem are less inclined to seek psychological help. This highlights the critical role of both gratitude and self-esteem in encouraging students to reach out for psychological support.

Gratitude plays a vital role in seeking psychological help because it enables students to recognize and appreciate the valuable contributions of others in solving their problems. When students feel grateful, they are more open to accepting assistance from others, such as guidance teachers, family members, and friends. On the other hand, high self-esteem boosts students' confidence in their abilities, allowing them to recognize their worth and competence. As a result, students with high self-esteem are more likely to have a strong network of social support, which provides them with more opportunities and the confidence needed to seek help when necessary.

Given these insights, guidance and counseling teachers are essential in promoting help-seeking behaviors. They can evaluate and improve existing strategies for promoting



guidance and counseling services within the school. Additionally, these teachers can offer preventive and curative services to address low help-seeking behavior. As part of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program, preventive efforts could include developing psychoeducational services to increase students' gratitude, self-esteem, and willingness to seek help. Such programs would focus on equipping students with the emotional resilience and skills to seek psychological support proactively, leading to better mental health outcomes.

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### Author Contributions Statement

The following are contributions from each author: JSN Ideas for Research Data collection and data analysis, MM Develop research ideas and quality checking for research.

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