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Positive Self-Talk As A Solution: Improving The Self-Confidence Of Students With Cleft Lip At SMAN 1 Geger

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Abstrak

Siswa dengan bibir sumbing sering mengalami rendahnya rasa percaya diri akibat stigma sosial di lingkungan sekolah. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan dukungan psikologis dan sosial untuk membantu meningkatkan kepercayaan diri siswa. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami dinamika interaksi antara guru Bimbingan Konseling (BK) dan siswa dengan bibir sumbing dalam upaya meningkatkan kepercayaan diri siswa. Wawancara dilakukan untuk menggali strategi, tantangan, serta dampak dari pendekatan yang digunakan oleh guru BK terhadap perkembangan psikologis siswa. Metode yang digunakan adalah wawancara mendalam dengan guru BK dan siswa yang menjadi subjek penelitian. Data dianalisis secara kualitatif. Analisis data kualitatif terdiri dari tiga jalur, yaitu reduksi data, penyajian data, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan anak dengan bibir sumbing sering menghadapi hambatan fisik dan psikologis yang memengaruhi kepercayaan diri. Dukungan melalui lingkungan inklusif, bimbingan konseling, terapi wicara, dan self-talk positif dapat membantu mereka mengatasi stigma, mengelola perasaan negatif, dan membangun rasa percaya diri. Dengan dukungan teman sebaya, guru, dan konselor, anak-anak ini dapat berkembang secara sosial dan emosional, menghadapi tantangan dengan optimisme, dan merencanakan masa depan tanpa terbebani stigma.

Kata Kunci: *Self-Talk Positif, Kepercayaan Diri, Bibir sumbing*

Abstract

Students with cleft lips often experience low self-confidence due to social stigma in the school environment. Therefore, psychological and social support is needed to help improve their self-confidence. This study aims to understand the interaction dynamics between counseling teachers and students with cleft lips in an effort to enhance students' self-confidence. Interviews were conducted to explore the strategies, challenges, and impacts of the approaches used by counseling teachers on students' psychological development. The method used in this study was in-depth interviews with counseling teachers and students as the research subjects. The data were analyzed qualitatively through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results showed that children with cleft lips often face physical and psychological barriers that affect their self-confidence. Support through an inclusive environment, counseling guidance, speech therapy, and positive self-talk can help them overcome stigma, manage negative feelings, and build self-confidence. With support from peers, teachers, and counselors, these children can develop socially and emotionally, face challenges with optimism, and plan their future without being burdened by stigma.

Keywords: *Positive Self-Talk, Self-Confidence, Cleft Lip.*

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INTRODUCTION

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Education is a process aimed at facilitating learning and the development of individuals' knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes so that they can contribute effectively to society. Education is not limited to formal instruction in schools but also includes informal experiences that support intellectual, emotional, and social growth. According to Slavin 2020) education plays a crucial role in shaping adaptive individuals who are capable of responding to the challenges of the modern world through inclusive and competency-based approaches. Such approaches enable students to develop critical and creative thinking skills that are relevant in a dynamic global context.

Education is a comprehensive process that involves various interconnected elements, including educational objectives, educators, students, educational facilities, and the learning environment. These elements cannot function independently; instead, they must operate synergistically, systematically, and continuously. The alignment among these components plays a vital role in determining the success of the educational process (Nurhayati and Imron Rosadi, 2022). One essential factor influencing students' success within this system is self-confidence.

Self-confidence refers to an individual's belief in their abilities, qualities, and self-worth to face challenges, make decisions, and interact effectively with others. It influences not only how individuals perceive themselves but also how they behave and engage with their environment. According to Bandura et al. (1977) self-confidence is closely related to the concept of self-efficacy, which refers to an individual's belief in their capability to organize and execute actions required to achieve specific goals. Both internal factors, such as positive thinking, and external factors, such as social support and recognition, play important roles in building self-confidence (Santrock, 2018). In educational contexts, enhancing students' self-confidence particularly those facing physical or social challenges can be achieved through psychological approaches, including positive affirmations, social skills training, and the creation of inclusive and supportive learning environments. These strategies help students feel valued, accepted, and capable of overcoming obstacles.

Rohmah et al. (2023) further emphasize that self-confidence reflects an individual's optimism and belief in their ability to cope with various situations and adapt to challenges. Self-confidence, which combines belief in one's abilities and self-respect, is a crucial aspect of personal development. Belief in ability refers to confidence in one's capacity to complete tasks or achieve life goals, while self-respect involves the belief that one deserves happiness and competence in various aspects of life (Rais, 2022). Elfiky, as cited in Kurniawan (2019) states that positive thinking is a source of strength and freedom. This strength enables individuals to find solutions to problems, enhance their abilities, and build self-confidence. At the same time, positive thinking serves as a source of freedom by releasing individuals from suffering and the influence of negative thoughts.

According to Birra (2024) positive self-talk consists of positive statements directed toward oneself with the purpose of motivating and enhancing individual abilities. Wahyu et al. (2024) also explains that positive self-talk helps individuals particularly athletes maintain focus, avoid being trapped by past mistakes, and prevent excessive fixation on long-term future goals. In contrast, negative self-talk is defined as internal dialogue that can diminish self-confidence and increase anxiety. Sahrainda et al. (2024) explain that positive self-talk is a psychological technique used to counteract negative self-talk that may trigger anxiety, depression, and pessimistic thinking, thereby disrupting individual functioning and performance. Positive self-talk has long been applied, especially in sports contexts, as a cognitive strategy to maintain focus, enhance motivation, and manage negative thoughts and emotions.

Over the past decade, positive self-talk has been widely studied as an effective psychological strategy for improving individual performance across various domains.

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Birra, (2024) reports that positive self-talk consists of self-directed statements aimed at motivating individuals and enhancing their abilities. The findings indicate that the application of positive self-talk helps individuals build self-confidence and regulate their thinking more productively. Sahrainda et al. (2024) further demonstrate that positive self-talk is effective in addressing negative self-talk, such as pessimistic thoughts, anxiety, and depression, which can hinder personal functioning and performance. In sports settings, positive self-talk has been used by athletes to maintain concentration, increase motivation, and regulate negative emotions during competition.

In terms of cognitive development, positive self-talk also contributes to self-regulation and stress management. Research by Safitri et al. (2024) shows that individuals who consistently use positive self-talk demonstrate improved adaptability to pressure and challenges in both professional and personal contexts. These findings indicate that positive self-talk not only enhances performance but also helps individuals overcome emotional and psychological barriers. Further studies by Izzah & Setyawati (2023) reveal that combining positive self-talk with relaxation techniques significantly improves mental well-being, particularly among individuals working in high-pressure environments. Therefore, positive self-talk has become a key approach in psychological interventions aimed at enhancing overall performance and well-being.

Based on observations and interviews conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Geger, several students with cleft lip were found to experience low self-confidence. These students often felt anxious and embarrassed when interacting with peers, fearing that their physical appearance would become a subject of discussion or ridicule. Difficulties also emerged during public speaking activities or classroom presentations, as students worried that their physical condition would divert attention and negatively affect their self-image. Additionally, some students felt socially marginalized in extracurricular activities and school events, which further exacerbated their lack of self-confidence. They also perceived stigma or negative attitudes from peers, even when not explicitly expressed, leading them to feel ignored or judged. Although the school has attempted to provide support, students with cleft lip often feel that they do not receive sufficient individualized attention to address the psychological and emotional challenges related to their physical condition. This situation highlights the importance of increased attention to the mental and social well-being of students with physical conditions so that they can develop confidence within the school environment.

To address the issue of low self-confidence among students with cleft lip, the implementation of positive self-talk techniques can serve as an effective solution. Positive self-talk involves engaging in supportive and constructive internal dialogue that can enhance self-confidence and reduce anxiety. Research by Setiari et al. (2022) demonstrates that self-talk techniques are effective in improving students' self-confidence in learning contexts. Similarly, Wahyuni (2022) reports that the application of self-talk techniques significantly increased students' self-confidence at SMP Negeri 18 Makassar. Through the consistent application of positive self-talk, students are able to transform negative thinking patterns into more positive ones, thereby strengthening their self-confidence across various situations. Based on the issues described above, low self-confidence among students with cleft lip represents a critical concern that requires serious attention within the context of inclusive education. Physical conditions accompanied by social stigma can negatively affect students' psychological well-being, particularly their self-confidence, which in turn impacts learning participation and social interaction in school settings. Therefore, systematic and evidence-based efforts are needed to help students overcome these psychological barriers appropriately and sustainably.

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In this regard, this study is important to conduct to examine in depth the application of positive self-talk as a solution for enhancing the self-confidence of students with cleft lip at SMA Negeri 1 Geger. This research is expected to provide empirical contributions regarding the effectiveness of positive self-talk as an applicable psychological strategy in school settings, as well as to serve as a foundation for developing more inclusive and responsive guidance, counseling, and instructional practices that address students' diverse needs.

METHOD RESEARCH

The research methodology is presented to provide a comprehensive overview of the research design, research participants, data collection techniques, research instruments, and data analysis procedures.

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. According to Sukestiyarno (2020), descriptive research aims to systematically describe and interpret research objects as they naturally occur in the field. This approach was selected to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' self-confidence and the efforts to address it through the application of positive self-talk techniques. Data were collected through structured interviews and observations. Structured interviews were conducted with the school principal, the guidance and counseling teacher, subject teachers, and ten students using a set of prepared interview guidelines. Observations were carried out to examine students' behaviors, particularly changes in attitudes and social interactions related to self-confidence.

The research subjects included the school guidance and counseling (GC) teacher and students of SMA Negeri 1 Geger. The guidance and counseling teacher served as the key informant, providing information related to students' psychological conditions as well as guidance and support programs that have been implemented or could be developed within the school. Instrument The research instruments used in this study included a structured interview guide, a self-confidence questionnaire, and an observation sheet. The interview guide was used to obtain information on students' self-confidence and the implementation of positive self-talk in guidance and counseling services, while the questionnaire and observation sheet were used to assess students' self-confidence levels and related behaviors. The use of these instruments enabled data triangulation, enhancing the validity of the research findings.

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive qualitative techniques through three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved summarizing, selecting, and critically reviewing information relevant to the research focus. Data display was presented in the form of narrative descriptions to facilitate understanding and analysis in accordance with the research objectives. Conclusion drawing was carried out by verifying the data through cross-checking interview and observation results to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the research findings.

RESULT

This study was conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Geger using a descriptive qualitative approach. The purpose of the study was to obtain an in-depth description of the self-confidence of students with the physical condition of cleft lip and the implementation of positive self-talk techniques within guidance and counseling services. Data were collected through direct observations, interviews, and documentation carried out in the school setting.

Indirect observation was conducted by involving the guidance and counseling (GC) teacher as an observer. Before the observation, the GC teacher received guidance from the

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researcher regarding the focus and indicators of observation. Initial observations identified several students with special conditions, such as cleft lip, incomplete ear formation, and slow learning ability. However, this study focused specifically on students with the physical condition of a cleft lip. The results of observations and interviews indicated that students with this condition tended to have low levels of self-confidence, particularly in social interactions with peers and teachers.

The implementation of positive self-talk services was carried out by the GC teacher by directly involving students through individual interviews and counseling sessions within the school environment. The services were conducted effectively and efficiently, although time constraints were encountered due to the need to adjust to the school's teaching and learning schedule. Positive self-talk sessions were held in a comfortable and private setting, allowing students to feel safe and free to express their feelings and experiences.

The evaluation of the implementation of positive self-talk services indicated that the activities were conducted in a structured, planned, and continuous manner. The GC teacher employed methods that were easy for students to understand and used motivational and goal-oriented language, thereby creating a supportive atmosphere. In addition, effective collaboration among the GC teacher, the school principal, and homeroom teachers contributed to the successful implementation of the services. The impact of positive self-talk was reflected in increased student self-confidence, characterized by the development of more positive thinking patterns, particularly the belief that having a cleft lip does not hinder students from achieving academic success or engaging in social interactions.

Data Reduction

During the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and focused on data obtained from interviews and observations of students with cleft lip at SMA Negeri 1 Geger. The raw data, which consisted of students' statements, behavioral notes during learning activities, and information provided by the guidance and counseling (GC) teacher, were filtered to identify aspects directly related to students' self-confidence.

The results of data reduction indicated that the field findings could be categorized into six main aspects: (1) academic skills, (2) social interaction, (3) personal problems, (4) social problems, (5) learning problems, and (6) career-related problems. In terms of academic skills, the retained data showed that students were cognitively able to follow the learning process but experienced difficulties when required to express their answers verbally. Regarding social interaction and social problems, the data revealed a tendency for students to avoid group activities, withdraw from social engagement, and experience teasing from peers. In the aspect of personal problems, the data indicated feelings of inferiority and anxiety arising from their physical condition. Meanwhile, in the aspects of learning and career problems, the retained data were related to communication difficulties, discomfort during presentations, and concerns about future aspirations.

Data that were not directly related to students' self-confidence were excluded. As a result, the data reduction process produced the main focus of the study, namely the low level of self-confidence among students with cleft lip, which is influenced primarily by psychological and social factors rather than academic factors.

Data Display

The results of interviews and observations of students with cleft lip are presented in the form of a table to provide a systematic overview of the aspects related to students' self-confidence. The aspects examined include academic skills, social interaction, personal problems, social problems, learning problems, and career-related problems.

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Based on the results of observations and interviews with students with the physical condition of cleft lip, the findings are presented as follows.

Table 1. Results of Student Interviews and Observations

No.	Aspect	Findings
1	Academic Skills	The student can follow academic lessons but has difficulty explaining answers verbally in front of the class.
2	Social Interaction	The student is reluctant to participate in group activities due to concerns about being teased by peers regarding their physical condition.
3	Personal Problems	The student feels insecure about their physical appearance, particularly when speaking in public, which leads them to withdraw from social interactions with larger groups.
4	Social Problems	The student is frequently the target of teasing from some classmates, resulting in reluctance to engage in social interactions and a tendency to spend more time alone rather than joining peer groups.
5	Learning Problems	The student sometimes has difficulty expressing ideas verbally, especially when required to explain answers in front of the class, leading to discomfort in learning activities that involve presentations or group discussions.
6	Career-Related Problems	The student is concerned that their physical appearance may become an obstacle to achieving future aspirations, causing hesitation in choosing career paths that require extensive social interaction or communication.

Conclusion Drawing

Based on the results of data reduction and data display, it can be concluded that students with cleft lip at SMA Negeri 1 Geger possess adequate academic abilities but experience significant psychological barriers, particularly low self-confidence. These barriers are characterized by feelings of inferiority, anxiety in social situations, and fear of negative evaluation from the surrounding environment. Experiences of teasing and social stigma further reinforce negative internal dialogue, which in turn leads to low participation in learning activities that require verbal communication, limited social interaction, and concerns regarding future aspirations and career choices. These findings indicate that the primary challenges faced by students are not cognitive in nature but are predominantly psychological and social.

The findings also demonstrate that the implementation of positive self-talk techniques within guidance and counseling services contributes positively to enhancing the self-confidence of students with cleft lip. Through individual counseling sessions, students are guided to identify negative thoughts arising from their physical condition and unpleasant social experiences and to replace them with constructive positive affirmations. The application of positive self-talk helps students develop a more positive self-perception, manage feelings of inferiority, and increase confidence in social interactions. Furthermore, an inclusive school environment free from teasing, along with effective

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collaboration among guidance and counseling teachers, subject teachers, and school administrators, strengthens the effectiveness of this intervention. Therefore, positive self-talk can be regarded as a relevant and practical psychological intervention strategy for improving self-confidence and social-emotional well-being among students with physical conditions.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the application of positive self-talk techniques contributes to the improvement of self-confidence among students with cleft lip at SMA Negeri 1 Geger. These findings are consistent with various previous studies demonstrating that positive self-talk enhances students' self-belief in educational contexts.

An experimental study involving university students revealed that positive self-talk training was effective in increasing participants' subjective self-confidence, as indicated by a significant difference between pretest and posttest scores (Afifah *et al.*, 2024). This finding confirms that positive self-talk functions as a cognitive strategy that helps individuals identify, challenge, and reconstruct negative thought patterns into more adaptive and supportive affirmations, thereby strengthening emotional regulation and self-confidence. Several studies have also shown that positive self-talk is effective as a form of cognitive restructuring that promotes changes in internal dialogue, enhances psychological well-being, and improves individuals' ability to cope with pressure and social stigma (Mulawarman *et al.*, 2024; Yosep *et al.*, 2025). Thus, the findings of this study align with previous research indicating that positive self-talk strengthens self-confidence through internal cognitive changes.

Furthermore, qualitative research conducted at SMPN 4 Banda Aceh demonstrated that self-talk techniques, such as positive affirmations, reframing negative thoughts, and complementary strategies such as visualization, had a significant impact on increasing students' motivation, resilience in facing challenges, and participation in learning activities. These findings reinforce the results of the present study conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Geger, where positive self-talk not only enhanced students' self-confidence but also encouraged greater social engagement (Aqilah, Sulistiana and Bakar, 2025).

Additional findings support the role of self-talk in fostering positive thinking patterns and emotional regulation among students. A literature review by Hairani et al. (2025) found that self-talk implemented through group counseling was effective in developing positive mindsets, increasing self-confidence, and improving students' motivational regulation. These results are particularly relevant for students with cleft lip, for whom negative thinking patterns resulting from social stigma represent a major barrier to social interaction.

Moreover, studies examining the level of positive self-talk among senior high school students indicate that many students remain within a moderate category of self-talk, suggesting the need for more intensive counseling interventions (Masi and Sugiharto, 2025). This finding underscores the importance of guidance and counseling teachers and school support systems in systematically implementing self-talk techniques to strengthen students' internalization of positive thinking.

From a psychological perspective, positive self-talk functions as an internalization of self-directed language that enables individuals to interpret experiences more adaptively and reduce negative responses to social stress (Agestianti, et al., 2024; Aqilah et al.,

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2025). This mechanism is particularly relevant for students with cleft lip, who frequently experience unwanted social evaluation. In this context, positive self-talk serves as a foundational coping strategy for managing stress and anxiety within educational and social interactions.

The findings of this study indicate that positive self-talk techniques not only strengthen individual self-confidence but also improve academic outcomes, such as classroom engagement and communication skills. This is consistent with the literature emphasizing that increased self-confidence through self-talk can enhance verbal abilities, participation in classroom discussions, and broader social skills.

CONCLUSION

Students with cleft lip often face physical and psychological barriers that affect their social interactions and self-confidence. Social stigma and teasing can be mitigated by fostering inclusive school environments and providing emotional support through guidance and counseling services. Supportive approaches, including the use of positive self-talk, speech therapy, communication skills training, and career counseling, can help these students manage negative emotions, replace maladaptive thoughts with positive affirmations, and plan their future with confidence.

Through inclusive education programs involving teachers and peers, students with cleft lip can experience acceptance, appreciation, and a sense of self-worth. With sustained support, they can develop social and emotional competencies and face challenges with resilience, confidence, and optimism.

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