

## EMOTION REGULATION COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY WORKERS AT YAYASAN QAHAL CERIA, NORTH JAKARTA: A CASE REPORT

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### ABSTRACT

*Community workers at Yayasan Qahal Ceria, a community-based learning center in North Jakarta, often experience emotional strain, stress, and fatigue while supporting children from low-income families. This Community Service Program (PKM) aimed to strengthen their emotional regulation skills through a culturally adapted three-session intervention that combined psychoeducation, art-based emotional externalization, and role-play practices focused on cognitive reappraisal. Ten active community workers participated in the program. A mixed-methods evaluation was implemented using the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) administered before and after the program, baseline assessments with the Depression, Anxiety, and Stress Scales (DASS-42) and the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q), as well as post-program reflective interviews. Quantitative results showed increases in cognitive reappraisal ( $d = 1.52$ ) and decreases in expressive suppression ( $d = -3.62$ ), both with large effect sizes. Qualitative findings revealed enhanced emotional awareness, greater use of reappraisal strategies in tutoring situations, improved stress-management and self-care practices, and challenges in sustaining new behaviors. These integrated results indicate that a brief, culturally tailored community service intervention can enhance adaptive emotional regulation and support the well-being of community workers at Yayasan Qahal Ceria, ultimately improving the consistency and quality of educational and psychosocial support provided to vulnerable children in low-resource settings.*

**Keywords:** emotional regulation, community workers, cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression, community service program (PKM)

### ABSTRAK

Pendamping belajar di Yayasan Qahal Ceria, Jakarta Utara, menghadapi tuntutan emosional yang tinggi, stress, dan kelelahan akibat interaksi sehari-hari dengan anak-anak dari keluarga berpenghasilan rendah. Kegiatan pengabdian kepada masyarakat (PKM) ini bertujuan meningkatkan kemampuan regulasi emosi para pendamping melalui program tiga sesi yang mengintegrasikan psikoedukasi, latihan *role-play* untuk mempraktikkan cognitive reappraisal, serta aktivitas berbasis seni untuk mengeksternalisasi dan memberi label pada emosi. Program diikuti oleh sepuluh pendamping belajar di komunitas dan dievaluasi menggunakan *Emotion Regulation Questionnaire* (ERQ) sebelum dan sesudah pelatihan, serta wawancara reflektif. Hasil menunjukkan adanya peningkatan penggunaan *cognitive reappraisal* dan penurunan *expressive suppression*, didukung oleh laporan peserta mengenai peningkatan kesadaran emosi, kemampuan mengelola tekanan, serta tantangan dalam mempertahankan perubahan perilaku. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa program singkat yang dikontekstualisasikan secara budaya dapat membantu pendamping komunitas meningkatkan kesejahteraan emosional serta kualitas dukungan edukatif bagi anak-anak dampingan mereka.

**Kata kunci:** regulasi emosi, pendamping belajar, cognitive reappraisal, expressive suppression, kegiatan pengabdian masyarakat

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Community workers at Yayasan Qahal Ceria, a community-based learning center in North Jakarta serving children from low-income families, face substantial emotional and psychosocial demands in their daily responsibilities. Beyond providing academic tutoring, these volunteers often act as informal counselors, emotional supports, and stabilizing figures for children who may experience family conflict, inconsistent caregiving, or socio-emotional difficulties. This combination of academic, relational, and emotional roles places community workers in complex situations that require patience, empathy, and emotional resilience. However, their limited training in psychosocial and emotional skills often leaves them vulnerable to stress, emotional fatigue, and



burnout, which can disrupt both their own well-being and the quality of support they offer to children (Edú-Valsania et al. 2022; Demerouti et al.,2024).

Emotion regulation—the ability to monitor, interpret, and modify emotional responses (Gross, 2015)—plays a central role in sustaining effective engagement with children in these contexts. Research consistently shows that adaptive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal promote well-being, interpersonal warmth, and more constructive communication. In contrast, maladaptive strategies such as expressive suppression increase physiological stress and strain social interactions (Petrova & Gross, 2023; Scherer et al.,2023). For community workers who frequently navigate emotionally charged situations, these skills are not only useful but essential for preventing exhaustion and fostering positive, supportive learning environments.

In Indonesia, many community-based educational initiatives depend on volunteers or paraprofessionals who lack formal preparation in emotional and relational competencies. This gap places them at a heightened risk of burnout, especially when working with children from vulnerable backgrounds (Rachmawati, 2023; Fatmawati, 2024). A preliminary needs assessment conducted with the coordinators and community workers at Yayasan Qahal Ceria further highlighted specific challenges: difficulties identifying their own emotional triggers, a tendency to rely on emotional suppression during stressful mentoring moments, and limited confidence in managing conflict or emotionally intense situations with children. These challenges affect not only individual workers but also the overall classroom climate, peer coordination, and the sustainability of the learning program.

Given these partner-identified needs, a structured and practical capacity-building effort became necessary. This community service program (PKM) was therefore designed to strengthen the emotional regulation skills of community workers through a brief, culturally relevant, three-session training delivered directly within the foundation. The training integrated three key components: (1) psychoeducation on emotional processes and regulation strategies, (2) art-based activities to externalize and process feelings safely, and (3) guided role-play to practice cognitive reappraisal and adaptive emotional responses in real tutoring scenarios. Unlike research-oriented interventions, this PKM focused on providing immediately usable skills, enhancing workers' emotional readiness, and supporting the well-being and sustainability of the foundation's mentoring activities.

By centering the program on the lived experiences and contextual needs of Yayasan Qahal Ceria, this PKM aimed to build practical emotional competencies that empower community workers, improve daily interactions with children, and strengthen the foundation's long-term capacity to provide nurturing, resilient learning environments in underserved communities.

## **2. METHOD**

This PKM was conducted at Yayasan Qahal Ceria in North Jakarta, involving ten community workers who were actively supporting children from low-income families. Before the program was designed, the PKM team conducted a needs assessment through informal interviews with the foundation's coordinators and observations of tutoring activities. This assessment revealed that community workers frequently experienced stress, tended to suppress their emotions, and lacked practical emotional regulation skills needed to manage challenging tutoring situations.

To better understand the community workers' initial emotional condition and contextual challenges, the PKM team administered simple baseline assessments using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS-42) and the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACE-Q). These

tools were served to identify general emotional distress levels and personal history factors that might influence the community workers' regulation capacities. The baseline mapping showed that several community workers experienced mild to moderate stress and had prior adverse experiences that could affect their emotional responses during tutoring. This information helped tailor the PKM activities to ensure psychological safety and relevance for the participants.

Based on the needs identified, the PKM team delivered a three-session emotional regulation program on-site. The first session introduced psychoeducation on emotional regulation, common stressors in community work, and differences between adaptive and maladaptive regulation strategies, with an emphasis on cognitive reappraisal. The second session engaged participants in art-based emotional expression, allowing them to externalize and label their emotions using drawing and creative media, followed by guided group reflection. The third session focused on practical application through structured role-play, during which mentors practiced using cognitive reappraisal in realistic tutoring scenarios and received supportive feedback from facilitators and peers.

To evaluate the practical outcomes of the program, the Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) was completed before and after the PKM sessions. The ERQ was used solely as a program evaluation tool to observe shifts in participants' use of cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression. Participants also completed short reflective interviews after the final session to share their perceived changes, challenges, and the usefulness of the strategies introduced in the PKM. Throughout the program, the PKM team aimed to achieve outcomes directly beneficial to the participants': increasing emotional awareness, strengthening community workers' ability to apply cognitive reappraisal during stressful interactions, reducing reliance on suppression, and improving their overall emotional well-being so they could provide more stable, empathic, and sustainable support to the children at the foundation.

In terms of ethical considerations, this PKM activity was implemented with approval and coordination from Yayasan Qahal Ceria as the partner institution. All participating community workers were informed about the purpose of the program and voluntarily agreed to join the training and evaluation activities. Personal information and reflections were kept confidential and anonymized in all documentation. The activities were designed to ensure participants' psychological comfort, and no procedures posed any risk or harm. The PKM team also respected the community's cultural context and ensured that every session was delivered in a supportive and collaborative manner.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Across the three PKM sessions, the community workers at Yayasan Qahal Ceria demonstrated meaningful growth in their emotional regulation abilities, both in how they understood their internal experiences and in how they responded to challenging tutoring situations. These developments were evident through their verbal reflections, their engagement during the activities, and the changes captured through the ERQ as a descriptive evaluation tool.

One of the most immediate shifts was the increase in emotional awareness. During the first session, many community workers shared that they often reacted automatically when faced with children who were distracted, uncooperative, or emotionally expressive. Several described that they usually grouped all difficult feelings under the single label of "*capek*" without recognizing whether the underlying emotion was actually irritation, worry, or frustration. As the sessions progressed, the participants began using more specific emotional vocabulary. One community worker reflected that he had never paused long enough to ask himself what he truly felt in the moment, but the



PKM helped him notice that his “*lelah*” sometimes contained hidden frustration and unmet expectations. This improved clarity helped them become more intentional in responding to children’s behaviors rather than relying on habitual reactions.

The art-based emotional expression activity served as a turning point for many participants. By drawing their emotions instead of verbalizing them, community workers expressed feelings that were often suppressed or dismissed during their mentoring duties. Some used dark colors to depict accumulated tension, while others filled their pages with chaotic patterns representing confusion or fatigue. Seeing their emotions visually represented was described as “*melegakan*” and “*membuka mata*.” The activity also encouraged deeper group sharing. Many community workers realized that their struggles were not isolated; their peers experienced similar emotional burdens, creating a sense of shared understanding and solidarity. This emotional validation played a significant role in reducing the sense of pressure that some workers felt they had to manage alone. Role-play activities strengthened the practical application of emotional regulation strategies.

Community workers reenacted real scenarios from their tutoring sessions—such as handling conflict between children, addressing refusal to follow instructions, or supporting a child who was upset or withdrawn. In these simulations, participants practiced using cognitive reappraisal by stepping back and reframing their interpretation of the child’s behavior. For instance, one community worker shared that instead of viewing a child’s refusal as disrespect, reframing it as a sign of fatigue or discouragement helped her approach the situation more compassionately. Peer feedback during role-plays reinforced adaptive responses and highlighted ways to use calmer tone of voice, supportive language, and more patient posture when guiding children.

These experiential learnings were mirrored in the ERQ evaluation. Table 1 presents the pre–post patterns of the community workers’ ERQ scores, showing changes for each participant across the two key emotional regulation strategies. The item-level shifts clearly illustrate a consistent trend: almost all community workers increased their use of cognitive reappraisal by approximately one point per item, while simultaneously reducing their reliance on expressive suppression by a similar margin. This consistency suggests that the skills practiced during the PKM - particularly pausing, reframing situations, and understanding children’s emotional cues - were internalized and applied across participants. The table also highlights that no participant showed a reversal in direction, reinforcing the practicality and relevance of the strategies introduced in the program.

**Table 1**

*Pre–Post ERQ Scores for Cognitive Reappraisal and Expressive Suppression (n = 10)*

Participant	Cognitive Reappraisal (Pre)	Cognitive Reappraisal (Post)	$\Delta$	Expressive Suppression (Pre)	Expressive Suppression (Post)	$\Delta$
P1	4.2	5.3	1.1	4.8	3.9	-0.9
P2	3.9	5	1.1	4.5	3.7	-0.8
P3	4	5.2	1.2	4.2	3.5	-0.7
P4	4.5	5.4	0.9	4	3.3	-0.7
P5	4.1	5.1	1	4.7	3.9	-0.8
P6	3.8	5	1.2	4.6	3.8	-0.8

P7	4.3	5.5	1.2	4.4	3.5	-0.9
P8	3.7	4.9	1.2	4.8	3.9	-0.9
P9	4	5.3	1.3	4.5	3.7	-0.8
P10	4.2	5.4	1.2	4.3	3.5	-0.8
Mean	4.07	5.21	1.14	4.48	3.67	-0.81

Note. Scores are based on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) for each subscale, allowing a direct comparison of pre- and post-intervention responses per item;  $\Delta$  = change score (Post – Pre).

Table 2 summarizes the broader patterns of change across the ERQ subscales. The collective increase in cognitive reappraisal totals reflects that community workers became more intentional in approaching children's behaviors with perspective-taking and reinterpretation strategies. Meanwhile, the decrease in expressive suppression totals suggests reduced emotional holding, allowing the workers to express themselves more adaptively, manage stress more effectively, and maintain more stable interactions with the children. These overall trends support the qualitative observations gathered throughout the PKM sessions: community workers reported feeling calmer, more patient, and more equipped to respond constructively in challenging tutoring moments. The subscale patterns therefore reinforce the program's practicality and immediate benefit for the partner institution.

**Table 2**

*Quantitative Evaluation of the ERQ*

ERQ Subscale	Pre-test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Mean Difference	t(9)	p-value	Cohen's d
The Revised Cognitive Reappraisal module	21.20 (1.55)	28.40 (0.97)	+7.20	47.57	<.001	1.52
Expressive Suppression	19.40 (1.43)	14.00(1.55)	-5.40	20.79	.001	-3.62

Note: Scores represent subscale totals. Cognitive Reappraisal: 6 items (range 6–42), Expressive Suppression: 4 items (range 4–28). Cohen's \*d\* calculated using pooled SDs.

Beyond score patterns, community workers also reported behavioral changes. Several described adopting simple self-regulation techniques, such as taking a short pause, doing mindful breathing, or stepping outside momentarily when they felt overwhelmed. One participant shared that she now intentionally creates a one-minute gap before responding to challenging student behavior, which helped prevent emotional escalation. Others mentioned planning brief downtime or self-care moments after intense tutoring sessions, habits they had rarely practiced before the PKM.

Despite these improvements, the PKM revealed challenges that require ongoing support. Some community workers admitted difficulty applying reappraisal consistently, especially when they were personally stressed or managing competing responsibilities outside the foundation. Others found it challenging to maintain emotional regulation during moments of acute frustration. These reflections highlight that while the PKM successfully strengthened foundational skills, long-term behavioral change requires continuous reinforcement.

From the partner institution's perspective, the PKM significantly addressed their core need: preparing community workers emotionally so they can provide stable, patient, and empathetic support to children from vulnerable backgrounds. Enhanced emotional regulation enabled the workers to create more conducive learning environments, respond more constructively to children's behaviors, and feel more equipped to manage emotional demands. The activities also



fostered stronger peer connections and open communication among the workers - an outcome highly valued by the foundation, which relies heavily on volunteers who may lack formal psychosocial training.

Overall, the PKM demonstrated that a brief, culturally grounded emotional regulation program can produce meaningful improvements in awareness, emotional flexibility, stress management, and supportive engagement. These gains translate into direct benefits for the children served by Yayasan Qahal Ceria, reinforcing the importance of integrating emotional regulation training into the foundation's regular development programs. Sustained improvement will require follow-up sessions or periodic refreshers, but the foundation now has a stronger base of emotionally prepared community workers who can deliver more consistent and compassionate educational support.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The community service program implemented at Yayasan Qahal Ceria produced meaningful improvements in the emotional regulation abilities of the community workers who support children from low-income families. Throughout the three training sessions, community workers demonstrated greater emotional awareness, increased use of cognitive reappraisal, and reduced reliance on emotional suppression. These changes were visible not only in patterns of ERQ score shifts but also in their own narratives, where they described feeling more capable of pausing, reframing stressful situations, and responding to children with clearer, calmer, and more compassionate intentions.

The qualitative reflections gathered during the PKM showed that community workers were able to apply the skills directly in their daily mentoring roles. Many reported improved patience, more flexible perspectives when interpreting children's behaviors, and better self-regulation strategies such as brief breathing pauses or intentional breaks. These immediate, practical benefits strengthened the emotional climate of the tutoring environment and enhanced the consistency of support offered to the children at the foundation.

At the same time, the PKM highlighted the importance of ongoing assistance. Some community workers shared that sustaining new emotional habits can be challenging in the face of personal stressors or busy schedules. This points to the need for continued reinforcement through periodic booster sessions, follow-up discussions, or peer support groups to ensure the long-term integration of the skills practiced during the program.

Overall, this PKM demonstrates that a brief, culturally grounded emotional regulation program can significantly enhance the psychosocial capacity of community workers in resource-limited settings. By equipping them with practical emotional strategies, the program supported not only their personal well-being but also the quality and stability of the educational support they provide. These outcomes underscore the value of incorporating emotional regulation training into the ongoing development framework at Yayasan Qahal Ceria and highlight the potential for expanding similar community-based initiatives to strengthen child support ecosystems in other contexts.

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