



From Self-Love to Self-Growth: Empowering Students to Recognize Their Potential at Witthayapanya Matthayom School, Thailand

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Abstract: This community service program aims to enhance students' self-awareness and personal development through self-love and self-growth approaches at Witthayapanya Matthayom School, Thailand. The program encourages students to recognize the importance of self-acceptance by identifying their strengths and weaknesses and developing a positive self-concept as a foundation for personal and career development. Students are also guided to foster self-growth through goal setting, self-improvement motivation, and the ability to realistically accept the process of personal change. The program is implemented through the delivery of educational materials and the application of Cognitive Restructuring (CR) techniques within a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) framework. Program effectiveness is evaluated using a 10-item questionnaire measuring self-concept, self-love, and self-growth, administered on a 4-point Likert scale and developed through an Item Response Theory (IRT)-based adaptation of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Descriptive statistical analyses, including frequencies, percentages, and means, are used to summarize students' responses and are complemented by qualitative observations from discussions and reflective activities. The results indicate high levels of student engagement, as evidenced by enthusiasm, active participation, and experience sharing throughout the sessions. These positive responses reflect increased awareness of self-love, contributing to enhanced self-confidence, motivation, and engagement in positive daily activities. Furthermore, the program strengthens students' self-growth, as demonstrated by increased motivation for self-improvement, clearer future-oriented goals, and a stronger commitment to becoming the best version of themselves. Overall, this education- and CBT-based program is empirically relevant to students' developmental needs, strengthens self-concept, and supports sustainable personal development for future readiness.

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Introduction

The flow and dissemination of information in the current era are unavoidable and have a significant impact on the field of education. In response to global challenges, the Ministry of National Education has developed materials on Competency-Based Education or Life Skills Education, emphasizing the importance of hard skills alongside fundamental self-awareness, which is considered essential for individual development (Gainau, 2019). Discussions on identity formation are closely related to adolescents or students who are in a developmental stage transitioning into adulthood. Educational policies that emphasize the development of self-awareness and life skills are positioned as a conceptual framework for understanding the urgency of identity formation among adolescent students. This emphasis is consistent with the developmental characteristics of adolescence, a stage commonly marked by identity exploration that is universal and not confined to specific cultural or regional contexts.

Theoretically, the need for self-awareness development among adolescents can be explained through Erikson's psychosocial development theory, which positions adolescence at the stage of *identity versus role confusion*. At this stage, individuals are confronted with developmental tasks involving the exploration of values, life goals, and social roles that shape their identity as a foundation for adulthood (Erikson, 1968). In line with this perspective, Arnett (2000) describes late adolescence as a period of *emerging adulthood*, characterized by intensive identity exploration across various life domains, including personal, social, and future career planning (Arnett, 2000). This developmental process is experienced by adolescents across cultures; therefore, the need for guidance in fostering self-awareness is relevant to students in diverse educational contexts, including Indonesia and Thailand, and is not limited to a specific national context.

Similarly, adolescents in Thailand do not exhibit significant developmental differences compared to their counterparts in Indonesia, as both groups experience a phase of identity exploration. At this stage, adolescents require adequate guidance and direction to navigate their developmental process, particularly in relation to personal development and career planning. The process of identity formation represents a challenging phase, as it involves the construction of self-identity and the development of personal potential as a foundation for future growth. This period constitutes a critical stage during which adolescents begin to explore and understand their identity, aspirations, and how they are perceived within a broader social context (Sari, 2024).

The concept of identity exploration, which is frequently highlighted during adolescence, can also be understood as part of the process of recognizing one's self-potential, including an awareness of personal strengths and limitations. Potential refers to innate abilities that may not always be consciously recognized. Everyone possesses a unique capacity for personal development. To actualize this potential, external conditions beyond the individual are essential. Educational institutions serve as formal entities dedicated to identifying and nurturing the potential of each student. Therefore, a personalized approach should be implemented in student development and assessment, rather than a generalized approach (Masni, 2018).

Witthayapanya Matthayom School is an Islamic school located in Bangkok, Thailand, widely known as an *Islamic Way School* that upholds the philosophy of "Education is a lifelong pursuit of knowledge." The school implements the KLT (Knowledge, Language, Taqwa) concept, which emphasizes mastery of scientific knowledge, global language proficiency (English and Arabic), and the development of religious character. Although most



students are Thai nationals, the school also enrolls several international students from countries such as Russia, Iraq, and others, including Indonesia. Consequently, Witthayapanya Matthayom School represents a multicultural educational environment in which English and Arabic are used as the primary languages of instruction.

Students in Thailand generally spend a considerable amount of time engaged in classroom learning as well as attending additional classes or tutoring sessions after school hours. Numerous studies indicate that high academic demands during adolescence have the potential to increase stress levels and limit students' opportunities for self-exploration, particularly when educational systems place greater emphasis on academic achievement rather than holistic individual development (Pisa, 2017). These developmental challenges may become more complex for students situated within minority contexts, such as Muslim students attending schools in predominantly non-Muslim environments. Research suggests that adolescents in minority contexts require higher levels of self-awareness and personal resilience to develop a healthy sense of identity and to maintain a sense of meaning and purpose in life (Phinney, 2013; Schwartz, Luyckx, & Vignoles, 2011). In this context, strengthening self-awareness and recognizing personal potential constitute important aspects of supporting students' development.

Preliminary observations of the learning environment at Witthayapanya Matthayom School, combined with an analysis of adolescents' developmental characteristics, indicated limited opportunities for structured self-exploration within an academically demanding and minority sociocultural context. Based on these theoretical considerations, this community service program aims to empower adolescent students at Witthayapanya Matthayom School, Thailand, to recognize and develop their personal potential through formal and non-formal educational activities tailored to individual characteristics and abilities, serving as a foundation for self-development and future career planning.

Self-concept is defined as an individual's understanding of themselves, which emerges through interactions with others (Fajrin et al., 2020). It represents self-reflection encompassing physical, psychological, social, emotional, and aspirational aspects, as well as personal achievements. Self-concept consists of cognitive and affective components. The cognitive component refers to self-image, which includes an individual's awareness and understanding of "who I am." This representation is commonly referred to as self-image. Meanwhile, the affective component involves self-evaluation, influencing levels of self-acceptance and self-esteem. Self-concept may manifest in both positive and negative forms. After developing an understanding of self-concept, students are then encouraged to identify their potential. The term potential originates from the meaning "to be strong," referring to an individual's inherent capacity or strength.

This community service initiative aims to enhance participants' self-awareness, thereby fostering a more positive self-concept. The activities are conducted in the form of educational sessions that provide knowledge to help students better understand themselves, including their self-concept, as a foundation for developing a more constructive personal identity. The program also seeks to strengthen students' self-confidence by encouraging them to recognize their positive attributes and gradually reduce negative tendencies through regular practice of positive affirmations integrated into their daily routines. Accordingly, acknowledging one's own intelligence and abilities is considered essential for achieving success in future professional endeavors.

Furthermore, self-potential must be actively explored so that students can identify both their strengths and limitations. Similarly, students at Witthayapanya Matthayom School



are expected to become more capable of selecting activities that support their personal development and determining appropriate strategies to address existing weaknesses once they gain a clearer understanding of their self-potential.

Method

The implementation method of this community service program was carried out in the form of activities designed to help adolescents recognize and develop a positive self-concept. The activities began with the provision of basic knowledge regarding personal identity, individual potential, and directions for self-development. Furthermore, participants were introduced to the Cognitive Restructuring (CR) technique, which is one of the methods within the Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) approach. Through this technique, students were encouraged to identify their strengths and weaknesses to determine which aspects need to be developed. Cognitive Restructuring focuses on cognitive processes by transforming maladaptive thought patterns into more positive ones, thereby promoting healthier emotional responses and behaviors (Erford, 2015).

The next stage was self-evaluation, in which participants were given an understanding of the importance of self-awareness while also fostering a sense of gratitude for the potential they possess. Subsequently, students were guided to build a more positive self-concept as a foundation for continuous personal growth. After the facilitator delivered the material, students were asked to complete a researcher-developed questionnaire as a post-activity evaluation. The instrument consisted of 10 statement items related to self-concept, self-love, and self-growth, measured using a 4-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was developed based on an Item Response Theory (IRT) approach as an efficient adaptation of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) {Rosenberg, (1965). The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis in the form of frequency and percentage distributions to describe students' responses to the implemented activities.

This activity was attended by 24 twelfth-grade students as the primary target of the program. The activity was conducted in May 2025 at Witthayapanya Matthayom School, Thailand. The training was designed to provide students with understanding and guidance regarding the importance of building a positive self-concept, fostering self-love, and developing personal potential (self-growth).

Result and Discussion

An overview of students' responses to the post-activity questionnaire is presented in the following table, detailing the frequency, percentage, and mean scores for each statement item related to self-love and self-growth. The mean score for each item was calculated by averaging participants' responses on the 4-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating more positive self-evaluations.

Table 1. Students' Responses to Self-Love and Self-Growth Questionnaire

No	Statement Items	Response Categories				Mean
		1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	
1	I feel comfortable with who I am	0 (0.0)	3 (12.5)	10 (41.7)	11 (45.8)	3.33
2	I like to compare myself with others and feel inadequate	3 (12.5)	5 (20.8)	11 (45.8)	5 (20.8)	2.75
3	I have a clear picture of who I want to be in the future	2 (8.3)	10 (41.7)	6 (25.0)	6 (25.0)	2.67



4	I feel confident with my abilities	0 (0.0)	3 (12.5)	15 (62.5)	6 (25.0)	3.13
5	I feel that I am not good enough as I expect myself to be	1 (4.2)	14 (58.3)	7 (29.2)	2 (8.3)	2.42
6	I can accept my weaknesses without feeling inferior	0 (0.0)	3 (12.5)	18 (75.0)	3 (12.5)	3.00
7	I feel my daily behavior reflects who I really am	1 (4.2)	3 (12.5)	17 (70.8)	3 (12.5)	2.92
8	I feel others value me as much as I value myself	1 (4.2)	11 (45.8)	9 (37.5)	3 (12.5)	2.58
9	I strive to be the best version of myself	0 (0.0)	5 (20.8)	11 (45.8)	8 (33.3)	3.13
10	I feel like a failure if I do not live up to my ideal self-image	2 (8.3)	3 (12.5)	17 (70.8)	2 (8.3)	2.79

The results indicate that students generally demonstrated moderate levels of self-love and self-growth across most statement items. Several indicators related to self-acceptance, confidence, and acceptance of personal limitations show relatively higher mean scores, suggesting that many students have begun to develop a positive self-concept. These findings reflect a generally healthy pattern of self-appreciation among the participants. However, items addressing social comparison, perceived inadequacy, and clarity of future goals yielded comparatively lower mean scores. This pattern indicates that a proportion of students still experience self-doubt and uncertainty, particularly in relation to identity formation and future orientation. Such conditions are consistent with the developmental characteristics of late adolescence, a period marked by ongoing identity exploration. Overall, the descriptive findings illustrate that while students exhibit positive tendencies in several aspects of self-love and self-growth, other areas remain in need of continued guidance. These results highlight the importance of sustained educational interventions that focus on self-awareness, identity development, and personal growth to support adolescents during this critical developmental stage.

From a theoretical perspective, these results align with Erikson's (1968) theory of psychosocial development, which highlights the stage of *identity versus role confusion* during late adolescence. Students' moderate scores on items such as Item 2 ("I like to compare myself with others and feel inadequate") and Item 3 ("I have a clear picture of who I want to be in the future") suggest that many are still negotiating their personal identity, consistent with Erikson's assertion that adolescents may experience uncertainty while exploring personal values, goals, and social roles. Similarly, Hurlock's developmental theory emphasizes that adolescents gradually develop self-concept and self-confidence, but challenges such as social comparison and future planning remain common during this stage (Hurlock, 1997).

These findings are also consistent with prior research on adolescents in Thailand. For example, studies have shown that various psychosocial factors influence self-esteem among Thai adolescents. A study on body image satisfaction among Thai female adolescents found that self-esteem is significantly associated with how young people perceive their own bodies, indicating that cultural and personal perceptions contribute to self-evaluation processes (Pisitsungkagarn, 2014). Another study found that social media addiction was related to self-esteem levels among high school students in Thailand, suggesting that social comparison through digital environments influences self-evaluation (Muanjan, 2022). These consistent patterns reflect typical developmental challenges in adolescence, where identity formation coexists with concerns about social evaluation and future orientation.



The descriptive results and qualitative observations suggest several practical implications. The relatively low clarity on future goals (Item 3) indicates the need for structured career guidance and goal-setting interventions, helping students develop concrete plans for their future roles. Likewise, moderate concern with social comparison (Item 2) highlights the importance of activities that promote self-awareness, resilience, and strategies to cope with peer evaluation. The interactive and participatory delivery of self-love materials, including discussions, reflections, and real-life examples, likely contributed to the higher scores in self-acceptance and confidence (Items 4, 6, 9), supporting the effectiveness of experiential learning approaches.

The high level of student engagement observed during discussions, reflections, and interactive exercises, along with the positive evaluation results from the post-activity questionnaire, indicates that the education and CBT-based interventions were empirically relevant and effective in addressing students' needs for self-awareness, self-confidence, and personal growth. In addition to the descriptive quantitative results, qualitative observations during the activity indicated that the delivery of self-love and self-growth materials was conducted in an interactive and participatory manner. Students were actively involved through discussions, question-and-answer sessions, and the sharing of personal experiences related to self-awareness and self-development. The use of real-life examples relevant to adolescents' daily experiences helped students better understand the material. The enthusiastic responses and active engagement observed during the sessions suggest that students were able to relate the concepts of self-love and self-growth to their own personal experiences, which supports the interpretation of the descriptive findings.



Figure 1. Photo of Students Participating in the Community Service Activity

In the closing session, students were invited to engage in a collective reflection on the key lessons learned during the activity. Overall, the positive impact of the self-love education program in improving students' knowledge, motivation, and self-concept supports existing evidence that school-based psychosocial interventions are effective in promoting positive youth development (Durlak et al., 2011). By fostering self-confidence, self-awareness, and meaningful engagement in daily activities, the program contributes to adolescents' holistic development and well-being. Thus, integrating self-love and self-growth education into school-based programs is a strategic approach to supporting students' mental and emotional health during a critical developmental stage.



Conclusion

In general, it can be concluded that adolescents at Witthayapanya Matthayom School have developed a fairly strong foundation of self-love, although it has not yet reached an optimal level. The predominance of self-love at a moderate level indicates that students can appreciate themselves, but still require further reinforcement to achieve a higher level of self-worth. Such improvement may be facilitated through school-based programs, religious guidance, and consistent family support, enabling adolescents to grow into more confident and resilient individuals who are capable of coping with social pressures in a healthy manner.

Recommendation

Based on the results of this community service activity, schools are encouraged to integrate self-love and self-growth education into sustainable school programs through guidance and counseling services, character education, and extracurricular activities. Teachers, counselors, and parents are expected to play an active role in creating a supportive environment that strengthens students' self-acceptance, self-confidence, and emotional resilience. In addition, future community service activities and research are recommended to involve more diverse participants and adopt long-term approaches to examine the impact of self-love and self-growth interventions on adolescents' psychological and academic development, particularly within multicultural educational contexts.

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