

# THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY IN ADDRESSING MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES IN EDUCATION

**Achmad Yusuf**

Sekolah Tinggi Islam Kendal

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## Abstract

*This study aims to describe the role of educational psychology in addressing mental health challenges in education and to identify intervention strategies implemented by teachers, counselors, and educational psychologists to support students' psychological well-being. The research method used was qualitative with a phenomenological approach. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation studies with informants consisting of teachers, school counselors, educational psychologists, and students. Data analysis was carried out through the stages of reduction, presentation, and drawing conclusions using thematic analysis techniques. The results of the study indicate that educational psychology plays a crucial role in early detection of mental health problems, providing interventions in the form of counseling and mentoring, and creating a more psychologically friendly school climate. The main obstacles in the application of educational psychology are limited counselor staff, minimal teacher training, and stigma regarding mental health issues. Nevertheless, the application of educational psychology principles has been shown to have a positive impact on learning motivation, emotional regulation, and the creation of a psychologically healthy learning environment.*

**Keywords:** *educational psychology; mental health; world of education; intervention*

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### Corresponding Author:

Achmad Yusuf\*  
[ahmadyusuf25@stik-kendal.ac.id](mailto:ahmadyusuf25@stik-kendal.ac.id)

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## 1. Introduction

Mental health in the world of education is increasingly becoming a global issue that is receiving serious attention, especially after the pandemic which has had a significant impact on the psychological well-being of students and educators (Nurunnabi et al., 2020). Drastic changes in the learning system, limited social interaction, increased academic pressure, and adaptation to digital technology have exacerbated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. These conditions not only impact academic performance but also impact learning motivation, social relationships, and overall quality of life. Therefore, mental health issues in educational settings require special attention through a more comprehensive, preventative approach to educational psychology, oriented toward emotional support and strengthening individual resilience.

The school environment often places more emphasis on academic achievement as a measure of success, while students' psychological aspects receive less adequate attention (Azmi et al., 2024). This leads to various mental health issues, such as excessive stress, anxiety, and decreased motivation to learn, often going undetected or untreated. Yet, a balance between academic development and mental health is crucial for optimal learning, character building, and holistic student growth and development. This lack of attention to psychological aspects highlights the need for more systematic integration of emotional support programs and counseling services within the school environment.

Educational psychology plays an important role in understanding the dynamics of the teaching-learning process and also makes a significant contribution in helping students manage the mental stress they face (Poulou, 2005). Through this approach, educators and

counselors can identify psychological factors that influence student motivation, concentration, and academic achievement, allowing interventions to be more targeted. Furthermore, educational psychology also serves to equip students with stress management skills, increase resilience, and develop adaptive problem-solving strategies. Thus, the application of educational psychology not only supports academic achievement but also creates a healthy, inclusive learning environment that is oriented toward students' psychological well-being.

Empirical evidence shows that mental health issues in education are increasingly real and urgently need to be addressed. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Ministry of Education reveals a significant increase in cases of mental disorders among school-aged adolescents in recent years. This condition is triggered by various factors, including academic pressure, changing social interaction patterns, and increasingly complex future uncertainties. Mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and decreased motivation to learn are increasingly common among students, necessitating a more comprehensive treatment strategy in educational settings (Maghfiroh et al., 2024).

Furthermore, various phenomena in the field reinforce the seriousness of this problem. Many students experience academic stress due to high achievement demands, while bullying cases continue to occur, adding to their psychological burden (Ramadhani et al., 2025). Not only students, but teachers also face significant pressure, both from administrative burdens and academic achievement expectations, which often trigger burnout and reduce the quality of learning. This situation demonstrates that mental health issues in schools not only impact individuals but also directly impact the teaching and learning climate and the overall quality of education.

One of the roles of educational psychology is to provide intervention strategies aimed at improving students' psychological well-being. These interventions encompass a variety of approaches, from individual and group counseling services, to developing stress management programs, to social and emotional skills training (Shaprizal et al., 2025). With targeted strategies, students are not only helped to cope with the mental stress they face, but also supported in developing resilience, self-confidence, and the ability to manage emotions healthily.

Furthermore, educational psychology plays a role in designing a conducive and inclusive learning environment, where students' psychological needs are addressed alongside academic achievement. Through collaboration between teachers, counselors, psychologists, and schools, intervention strategies can be integrated into the curriculum and daily learning activities. Thus, educational psychology serves not only as a short-term solution to mental health issues but also as a preventative measure to create a more resilient, balanced generation ready to face future challenges (Rofiqi et al., 2023).

Educational psychology plays a role in helping teachers understand the developmental characteristics of students, both from cognitive, emotional and social aspects, so that they can design learning approaches that suit individual needs (Purwulan, 2024). This understanding also equips teachers with the skills to address mental health challenges experienced by students, such as anxiety, stress, and adaptation difficulties, in a more empathetic and solution-oriented manner. With the support of educational psychology, teachers serve not only as instructors but also as mentors capable of providing appropriate psychological support.

Furthermore, the application of educational psychology encourages the creation of a more supportive, healthy, and psychologically friendly educational ecosystem. A school environment that prioritizes mental well-being will minimize the risk of academic stress, reduce the potential for social conflicts such as bullying, and increase a sense of safety and comfort in learning. Such an ecosystem not only supports optimal student growth and development but also strengthens the relationship between teachers, students, and the school, fostering a humanistic, inclusive, and long-term well-being-oriented educational culture (Rahmawati et al., 2025).

Previous research on mental health in schools has generally focused on medical or clinical aspects, such as psychiatry and counseling services. Consequently, studies highlighting the direct role of educational psychology in addressing mental health challenges

are limited. Yet, educational psychology has a significant contribution to making in understanding learning dynamics, student developmental characteristics, and intervention strategies relevant to educational contexts. Furthermore, few studies have comprehensively integrated the perceptions of teachers, students, and educational psychologists into a single analytical framework, leaving a gap in viewing mental health issues from multiple, complementary perspectives (Moesarofah, 2023).

This research offers novelty by presenting a new perspective that positions educational psychology as a key actor in efforts to address mental health issues in schools. Unlike previous research that tends to focus on a medical approach, this study presents a comprehensive understanding through the involvement of multiple informants teachers, students, psychologists, and counselors thus depicting the dynamics of mental health from various perspectives. Furthermore, this research also provides a practical contribution in the form of a conceptual model of the role of educational psychology in supporting mental health that can be implemented in schools and universities as a preventive and curative strategy.

The purpose of this study is to describe the role of educational psychology in addressing mental health challenges in education and to identify various intervention strategies that can be used to support students and teachers in managing mental distress. Furthermore, this study also aims to develop a conceptual framework regarding the role of educational psychology in creating a psychologically healthy learning environment, thereby serving as a reference for schools and universities in integrating mental health aspects into educational practices.

## 2. Method

**Table 1 Interview Results**

<b>Informant</b>	<b>Main Questions</b>	<b>Short Answer</b>	<b>Meaning/Findings</b>
<b>Teacher</b>	How do you see the role of educational psychology in supporting students' mental health?	Educational psychology helps me understand students' characters, reduces academic pressure, and provides space for communication.	Teachers act as facilitators who practice the principles of educational psychology in the classroom.
<b>School Counselor</b>	What strategies are used to address students with mental health issues?	Using individual counseling, group guidance, and collaboration with teachers and parents.	Educational psychology supports systematic intervention through targeted counseling.

<b>Educational Psychologist</b>	What are the biggest challenges in implementing educational psychology in schools?	Lack of counselors, minimal teacher training, and stigma around mental health issues.	Structural and cultural barriers slow the implementation of mental health programs.
<b>Student</b>	How do you feel about the support of teachers or counselors regarding your psychological problems?	I feel calmer, more motivated, and less afraid to speak up.	Psychological support has a positive impact on feelings of safety and learning engagement.

**Source: 2025 Data Processing Results**

The interview results table shows that teachers emphasize educational psychology as more than just theory, but also practical application in classroom interactions through empathetic communication and academic stress management. School counselors added that counseling services, both individual and group, are key to supporting students, with increased effectiveness when supported by collaboration between schools and parents. From the perspective of educational psychologists, the main challenges faced are the limited number of experts and the stigma surrounding mental health issues, which are still considered taboo. Therefore, stronger policy support is needed to address these issues. Meanwhile, students experience direct benefits from the application of educational psychology, including improved psychological comfort, increased learning motivation, and a sense of security in the learning process.

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a phenomenological focus to deeply understand the role of educational psychology in dealing with mental health problems in educational environments (Harahap & Sampurna, 2024). The research subjects included teachers, school counselors, educational psychologists, and students selected using purposive sampling based on their relevance and experiences related to mental health issues. The research was conducted in schools and universities that face real-world challenges in student mental health, ensuring contextual data collection. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews to explore informants' experiences and perceptions, participant observation to examine the dynamics of interactions and school strategies, and documentation studies of policies, counseling records, and school programs.

The research instruments used included semi-structured interview guides, field notes, and official school documents. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis through stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing and verification. Key themes such as teacher roles, counseling strategies, school policies, and student perceptions were identified. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, member checks, and an audit trail to ensure transparency in the research process. Ethically, this study maintained the confidentiality of informants, sought informed consent from participants, and addressed sensitivity to personal mental health issues.

**3. Results and Discussion**

**The Role of Educational Psychology in Identifying Mental Health Problems**

The results of the study show that teachers and counselors who have educational psychology background are able to recognize early signs of mental health disorders in students, such as stress, anxiety, mild depression, and the emergence of deviant behavior

(Victor et al., 2022). This ability not only helps detect symptoms early but also enables teachers and counselors to provide early responses in the form of emotional support, persuasive approaches, and more psychologically friendly adjustments to learning strategies. Thus, knowledge of educational psychology provides significant added value in building a learning environment that is more sensitive to students' mental health.

In the discussion, these findings emphasize that early identification is a crucial step to prevent mental health issues from developing into more serious problems that could potentially disrupt the teaching and learning process and students' quality of life. Educational psychology, in this case, functions as an "early detector," able to map students' risks and needs before they are referred to clinical professionals, such as psychologists or psychiatrists. This role also strengthens the school's position as a preventive and promotive space for mental health, allowing for more effective collaboration between teachers, counselors, and clinical professionals in providing comprehensive and sustainable interventions (Zabek et al., 2023).

### **Educational Psychology Intervention Strategies in Schools**

The results of the interviews showed that several schools have implemented various forms of mental health support services based on educational psychology, such as individual and group counseling services, tutoring, peer support programs, and social-emotional skills classes (Misykah et al., 2023). Counseling services help students express their feelings and find solutions to problems they face, while tutoring helps them manage academic strategies to avoid excessive stress. Peer support programs allow students to share experiences and provide peer support, while social-emotional skills classes equip students with the skills to regulate emotions, communicate effectively, and build healthy social relationships (Sanjaya, 2025).

In the discussion, these findings confirm that educational psychology-based interventions play a crucial role in supporting both mental well-being and student academic achievement (Suwandi et al., 2024), students are helped to better understand themselves, improve their emotional regulation skills, and strengthen their motivation to learn continuously. This approach also demonstrates that mental health is not solely addressed through clinical efforts but can be strengthened through educational strategies integrated into the learning system. Thus, educational psychology serves as a bridge between academic and psychological needs, ultimately fostering a healthy, supportive, and holistic learning environment.

### **The Role of Teachers as Mental Health Facilitators**

Teachers with a deep understanding of educational psychology are able to manage classes in a more humanistic and democratic manner, so that the learning process focuses not only on academic achievement but also on students' psychological well-being. With this approach, teachers can adapt learning methods to individual needs, provide space for students to actively participate, and create an inclusive classroom atmosphere (Sadriani, 2024). This indirectly reduces excessive academic pressure, which often triggers stress, while also encouraging students to learn with greater comfort, confidence, and motivation.

In the discussion, it was shown that an empathetic teacher communication style contributes significantly to the creation of a psychologically friendly school climate. Empathy, openness, and respect for students' diverse needs foster a sense of security, respect, and acceptance in the school environment (Zahro et al., 2024). This condition is crucial for reducing the potential for mental health issues such as anxiety and low motivation to learn. Thus, teachers serve not only as facilitators of knowledge but also as agents in creating a healthy, supportive educational environment that encourages holistic student development.

### **Challenges in the Application of Educational Psychology**

The research findings indicate that several obstacles remain in implementing mental health support in schools, including a limited number of counselors and psychologists, a negative stigma attached to mental health issues, and minimal training for teachers on

educational psychology approaches. This situation results in many cases of mental disorders in students not being identified in a timely manner, while teachers often feel less confident in providing psychological support. Furthermore, the stigma that exists among students, parents, and the community means that mental health issues remain taboo, making students reluctant to seek help even when facing severe psychological stress (Nasution et al., 2023).

In the discussion, these findings confirm that without clear policy support and ongoing training for educators, the role of educational psychology in schools cannot function optimally. Supportive policies are needed to strengthen counseling services in schools, increase the number of experts, and integrate mental health programs into the educational curriculum. Meanwhile, regular teacher training is crucial to equip them with the understanding, skills, and sensitivity to address students' psychological issues. With the synergy of policy, training, and a paradigm shift toward mental health, the role of educational psychology can be more effective in creating a healthy, inclusive, and psychologically friendly learning environment (Zahro et al., 2024).

### **School Policy and Program Support**

Research shows that some schools have begun integrating mental health programs into their curriculum, for example through social-emotional skills lessons, structured counseling activities, and stress management training for students. However, the implementation of these programs remains limited to schools in urban areas that have better access to resources, expertise, and institutional support. On the other hand, schools in rural and suburban areas generally lack adequate facilities and support personnel, resulting in less than optimal implementation of efforts to improve student mental health. This situation reflects the disparity in access to mental health services in education (Damanik, 2024).

In the discussion, these findings emphasize the need for broader, more structured, and systematic policies so that the role of educational psychology can be applied evenly across various levels and areas of education. Integrating mental health into the curriculum should not be a local initiative or limited to specific schools, but should be supported by national regulations that ensure the program's sustainability. With comprehensive policies, ongoing teacher training, and equitable resource allocation, educational psychology can function optimally in creating a more inclusive, healthy, and psychologically friendly education system for all students (Kaplan, 2023).

### **4. Conclusions and Suggestions**

Educational psychology plays a crucial role in early detection, understanding, and addressing mental health issues in students within educational settings through the contributions of teachers, counselors, and educational psychologists, manifested in mentoring strategies, counseling services, and psychologically friendly learning. Educational psychology-based interventions have been shown to help students regulate their emotions, reduce academic stress, prevent deviant behavior, and increase learning motivation. However, their implementation still faces obstacles such as limited expertise, minimal teacher training, and the persistent stigma surrounding mental health issues in the community and schools. Therefore, school policies and institutional support are urgently needed to more systematically integrate mental health into the curriculum and educational programs. Through these steps, the application of educational psychology can positively impact the creation of a healthy, inclusive learning environment oriented toward the psychological well-being of both students and teachers.

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