

# Teachers' Knowledge and Attitudes Towards Trauma-Informed Practices

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## Abstract

The impact of complex childhood trauma can interfere with students' personal and academic development. Although many studies suggest the vital role of educators in supporting trauma-impacted students, research on this topic is minimal. This study investigates teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards trauma-informed practices in school. Data was collected from the 32-hour workshop on trauma-informed practices, and a quantitative analysis was conducted to compare teachers' knowledge of trauma-informed practices before and after the workshop. Then, teachers' attitudes toward implementing this approach were analysed. A Wilcoxon test result shows significant differences in teachers' knowledge before and after the workshop ( $p < 0.001$ ). Findings also indicate a positive attitude towards trauma-informed practices in school, where most participants ( $n=66$ , 85%) indicated that they want to implement trauma-informed practices in school. Therefore, occupying teachers with trauma-informed practice skills can be potentially helpful in supporting students who show challenging behaviours due to disruption caused by adverse childhood experiences.

## 1. Introduction

The impact of adverse childhood experiences on individual health was first reported in 1998 (Felitti et al., 1998). The concerning findings of this study, followed by more research, investigated the impact of adverse childhood experiences. A recent study conducted using data from the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health found that 22.5% of children had endured economic hardship; 21.9% separation or divorce of parents or guardians; 8.1% a household member with alcoholism or substance abuse; and 7.1% a mentally ill, depressed, or suicidal member of the household (Crouch et al., 2019).

As happened in other countries, children in Indonesia also experienced adverse experiences from violence, abuse, neglect and poverty. Data from UNICEF reported that two of three children in Indonesia have experienced at least one type of violent event (UNICEF, 2020). Aligning with this data, the Indonesian Ministry of Women Empowerment and Child Protection reported that adverse childhood experiences mostly happened within households (Kemenpppa, 2024). Additionally, data from the Indonesian statistic bursary shows that the number of divorce cases in Indonesia increased by 53.5% from 2020 to 2021 (BPS, 2022). This situation is more likely to cause trauma in Indonesian children.

Trauma-informed care is an approach that aims to address the impact of trauma. Many studies reported the effectiveness of this approach in educational, health and community settings (Firmin et al., 2024; Kisiel et al., 2024; Pulcini et al., 2024). Despite growing interest in studying trauma-informed practices in school, research exploring teachers' knowledge of trauma-informed practices and teacher attitudes toward this practice is minimal, especially in Indonesia.

This study aims to investigate teachers' knowledge and attitudes towards trauma-informed practices. Findings from this study provide information on to what degree Indonesian teachers understand trauma-informed practices and their attitude toward implementing these practices in supporting students in schools.

## 2. Method

This study was conducted during an online 32-hour workshop with Indonesian teachers. Before the workshop, 168 participants filled out the pretest survey, and 78 participants completed the post-test. The

pretest and post-test are not mandatory for the participants; only participants willing to do the test complete the test. Therefore, the number of pretest and post-test participants is different.

This study hypothesises that there is a significant difference in teachers' knowledge of trauma-informed practices before and after the workshop. Besides, this study also hypothesises that teachers have a positive attitude in implementing trauma-informed practices to support trauma-impacted students in school.

Data on teachers' knowledge of trauma-informed practices was assessed using scale questions. Then, the pretest and post-test data were compared using the Wilcoxon test in SPSS. Data on teachers' attitudes were only asked on the post-test and analysed by calculating the frequencies of each response. Data on teachers' attitudes were collected after the workshop; the participant was asked whether trauma-informed practices were applicable or not using scale questions.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Data analysed in this study included 168 responses from the pretest and 78 responses from the post-test. In the pretest, 144 participants identified as female, and 44 identified as male. A total of 25 participants were under 30 years old, 46 participants were between 30 and 40 years old, 30 participants were 40 to 50 years old, and 67 participants were more than 50 years old (see Table 1).

The post-test reported that 59 participants were identified as female, and 19 participants were identified as male. Twelve participants were under 30 years old, 27 were between 30 and 40 years old, ten were between 40 and 50 years old, and 29 were more than 50 years old (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Participants Demography**

| Pretest         |     |
|-----------------|-----|
| Gender          |     |
| Female          | 124 |
| Male            | 44  |
| Age             |     |
| <30 years old   | 25  |
| 30-40 years old | 46  |
| 40-50 years old | 30  |
| >50 years old   | 67  |
| Post-test       |     |
| Gender          |     |
| Female          | 59  |
| Male            | 19  |
| Age             |     |
| <30 years old   | 12  |
| 30-40 years old | 27  |
| 40-50 years old | 10  |
| >50 years old   | 29  |

The comparison test shows that the p score of the pretest and post-test is less than 0.001, which means the hypothesis of this study is accepted. Therefore, there are significant differences in teachers' knowledge of trauma-informed practices before and after the workshop (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Comparison Score of Pretest and Post-test**

|                        |         |
|------------------------|---------|
| Z                      | -3.385b |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) | >0.001  |

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

The calculation of frequencies of teacher attitudes toward trauma-informed practices in schools shows that most participants (n=46, 59%) agree that trauma-informed practices are applicable in school, 20 participants (26%) strongly agree that trauma-informed practices are applicable in school, seven participants (9%) unsure whether trauma-informed practices applicable or not, and only 5 participants (6%) believed that trauma-informed practices are inapplicable in schools (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Teachers' Attitudes toward Trauma-Informed Practices**

| Teachers' attitudes | N  | %  |
|---------------------|----|----|
| Strongly agree      | 20 | 59 |
| Agree               | 46 | 26 |
| Unsure              | 7  | 9  |
| Disagree            | 5  | 6  |

The findings of this study indicated that participants' knowledge of trauma-informed practices increased after they took the workshop. Although trauma-informed practices are relatively new for Indonesian teachers, participants also reported positive attitudes toward implementing them in school. After completing the trauma-informed seminar, the participants got an understanding of trauma-informed practices that are more likely to influence their attitudes toward these practices; therefore, they show positive belief that trauma-informed practices are applicable in school. Previous studies also proved that a better knowledge of trauma-informed care can make participants have positive attitudes toward this approach (Galvin et al., 2020; Long et al., 2024; Salameh & Polivka, 2020).

This study also proved that online training positively impacts increasing participants' knowledge. These findings align with a previous study that also implemented online training to improve participants' knowledge about trauma-informed care (Simons et al., 2024; Strolin-Goltzman et al., 2023). It is clear that, well-organized online training can improve participants' knowledge of trauma-informed practices.

In conclusion, this study provides scientific proof that online training can effectively improve the participants' knowledge of trauma-informed practices. Moreover, participants view that trauma-informed practices are practical to help students who have experienced complex childhood trauma. This study recommends implementing trauma-informed practices in school and providing teachers with trauma-informed skills that can be applied in school daily activities to address challenging behaviour that interferes with students' learning.

## 4. Conclusion

Despite the challenges that arise in online training, the conducted training successfully increased teachers' knowledge of trauma-informed practices. Most participants had a positive attitude toward trauma-informed practices. These results confirm that structured online training is an effective method for improving teachers' understanding of trauma-informed practices. Schools need to equip teachers with trauma-informed practice skills to better support children who have experienced trauma.

## Author Contributions

Septinda Rima Dewanti: Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Investigation; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Visualization; Roles/Writing - original draft. Eko Pramudya Laksana: Writing - review & editing.

## Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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