

The Urgency of Developing a Cognitive Behavioral Counseling Self-Management Module to Enhance Students' Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence in the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to describe the needs analysis in developing and testing the effectiveness of a counseling e-module based on cognitive behavioral counseling (CBT) and self-management techniques to address the problem of low emotional and spiritual intelligence of students at PGRI Mahadewa Indonesia University. The needs analysis revealed that students need better self-understanding, emotional regulation skills, clear life goals, social support, and interesting and relevant learning methods. Preliminary research data showed relatively low scores on the indicators. Positive Attitude Towards Difficulties (62/100) and Social Skills (61/100), which confirms the need. Using the Research and Development (R&D) approach with the ADDIE model, this research includes needs analysis, prototype design, development, and implementation through limited trials and quasi-experiments with experimental groups (using e-modules) and controls (conventional counseling/no intervention), as well as effectiveness evaluation using pre-tests and post-tests. This e-module needs analysis has proven to be an innovative and effective solution to improve students' mental well-being and resilience, especially in meeting the needs identified through the needs analysis.

Keywords: CBT, Self-Management Techniques, Emotional Intelligence, Spiritual Intelligence, E-Module Development

1. Introduction

Emotional intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to recognize, understand, manage, and express emotions adaptively in various life contexts (Goleman, 2005). Emotional intelligence consists of five main indicators: (1) self-awareness, namely the ability to recognize

and understand personal emotions; (2) self-control, namely the ability to manage emotions in stressful situations; (3) self-motivation to consistently achieve goals; (4) empathy for the feelings and perspectives of others; and (5) social skills to build constructive relationships. Imbalances in these aspects can cause students to experience prolonged academic stress,

interpersonal conflict, and even psychological disorders. Then, spiritual intelligence is an individual's ability to understand the deeper meaning of life, live life with noble values, and interpret life experiences in a broader, transcendental framework. According to Zohar & Marshall (2012) spiritual intelligence includes indicators such as: (1) awareness of the deepest values and meanings in life; (2) the ability to place problems in a broader and more reflective context; (3) commitment to universal moral principles; (4) the capacity for transcendence or connectedness with something greater than oneself; and (5) the ability to face suffering wisely. Students who have a balance in these aspects are generally more resilient to identity crises and are better able to live academic life with serenity and a clear purpose.

This analysis focuses on the low levels of Emotional Intelligence and Spiritual Intelligence in the academic lives of university students. An imbalance in emotional management and a deeper understanding of life is often the primary cause of academic stress, disrupted social relationships, and a decline in psychological well-being. Students who are unable to recognize and manage their emotions effectively tend to experience prolonged stress, social withdrawal, and difficulty adapting to complex academic demands. Furthermore, weak Spiritual Intelligence also makes students vulnerable to losing direction in life, easily discouraged when faced with failure, and lacking a foundation of values for decision-making. Therefore, an approach is needed that can support the strengthening of students' Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence in a systematic and measurable manner, so that they can grow as balanced, resilient, and meaningful individuals in their academic and personal lives.

Recent literature emphasizes that interventions combining cognitive-behavioral counseling (CBT) with self-management techniques can effectively enhance students' emotional and spiritual capacities and reflective thinking (Martyn-Nemeth et al., 2016; Nwadi et al., 2025; Z. Zhou et al., 2024). By engaging in structured self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-

reinforcement, and strategic planning, students are empowered to independently recognize negative thought patterns, manage emotional responses, and clarify personal values. This integrative approach positions students as active participants in shaping their cognitive, emotional, and spiritual development rather than passive recipients of instruction.

However, previous interventions have rarely integrated cognitive-behavioral counseling with structured self-management in a digital learning format specifically targeting both emotional and spiritual intelligence among university students, highlighting a critical gap in current educational support programs. Recent research shows that students with good emotional regulation skills are better able to manage academic stress, maintain social relationships, and deal with campus pressure more constructively, as reported in several recent studies (Annisa et al., 2024; Kasman et al., 2025; Rinaldi et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024). On the other hand, students who have difficulty managing their emotions often become trapped in prolonged stress, experience disturbances in interpersonal relationships, and exhibit isolative tendencies that worsen their academic adjustment, as supported by recent empirical evidence on emotion regulation difficulties, social exclusion, and psychosocial outcomes (Liu et al., 2024; Vaz et al., 2025; Wang et al., 2024). In this context, the concept of emotional self-efficacy becomes relevant because it is believed to play an important role in reducing excessive negative reactions to failure or academic pressure. Students with high levels of emotional self-efficacy generally indicate stronger resilience and lower levels of academic stress, as shown in recent empirical studies (Annisa et al., 2024; Chongjin et al., 2025; Masri & Melhem, 2025).

Likewise with spiritual intelligence, students who demonstrate awareness of the meaning of life are able to view challenges as opportunities for personal growth and adhere to noble values in difficult situations. For example, students with strong spiritual intelligence view failure not as an end, but as an opportunity for reflection and self-improvement. They are able to maintain an

attitude of gratitude, patience, and humility despite academic pressures and personal challenges. Conversely, students with low spiritual intelligence tend to feel lost, easily discouraged, or trapped in a void of meaning, which can lead to decreased motivation and mental well-being.

At PGRI Mahadewa Indonesia University, where the majority of students come from rural areas with lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds, academic challenges are exacerbated by a lack of skills in managing emotions and finding meaning in life. Initial surveys indicate students struggle with exam stress, adapting to the campus environment, and building social relationships. For example, when facing a difficult exam, many students feel so anxious that they have difficulty concentrating and remembering the material. When criticized by lecturers, they tend to feel devastated and lose their motivation to study. This condition is related to emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2005), which encompasses self-awareness, self-control, and social skills. These are often suboptimal and manifest in behaviors such as irritability, withdrawal, and difficulty collaborating. Furthermore, spiritual intelligence, including value awareness, the ability to place problems in a broader context, and moral commitment, also needs improvement because many students feel lost, easily discouraged, and lack a foundation in values, which impacts their motivation to learn and mental well-being.

These challenges underscore the necessity for interventions that can systematically enhance students' spiritual intelligence alongside emotional intelligence, ensuring holistic development that supports academic success and personal resilience. Given these challenges, interventions that integrate CBT and self-management techniques are particularly relevant. By promoting reflective thinking, independent emotional regulation, and clarification of values, students can actively strengthen both their emotional and spiritual intelligence. Evidence suggests that such programs can lead to improvements not only in academic performance and coping with stress, but also in social relationships, resilience, and long-term personal

development (May & Denecke, 2022; Situmorang, 2018).

The need for self-understanding means that students need a better understanding of their emotions, how they influence their behavior, and how to identify triggers for negative emotions. The need for Emotional Regulation Skills: Students need practical skills to manage negative emotions such as stress, anxiety, and anger, and increase positive emotions such as happiness and optimism. The need for a clear purpose in life, students need help finding meaning in life and a clear purpose, which can provide direction and motivation in living their academic and personal lives. The need for social support means that students need social support from peers, lecturers, and family to overcome challenges and feel connected to the community. The need for engaging and relevant learning methods means that students need learning methods that not only focus on cognitive aspects, but also touch on emotional and spiritual aspects, and are relevant to their experiences and needs.

This needs analysis indicates that students perceive a lack of structured support in developing these skills, and existing learning methods do not optimally address emotional and spiritual aspects. Research shows that high emotional self-efficacy correlates with lower levels of academic stress management (Kasman et al., 2025; Masri & Melhem, 2025; Nawawi, 2025; Thionata & Soetjningsih, 2023) underscoring the need for effective intervention. This study is novel in developing a CBT-based self-management e-module that systematically targets both emotional and spiritual intelligence, providing an innovative and practical intervention tailored to university students' needs. Therefore, the development of a cognitive-behavioral counseling e-module with self-management techniques is a relevant solution for improving students' emotional and spiritual intelligence, helping them grow in a balanced, resilient, and meaningful way, and addressing the need for structured, targeted, and relevant support tailored to their experiences.

2. Methodology

This study used part of the Research and Development (R&D) approach, based on the systematic ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation) model (Waldan et al., 2024). The selection of Cognitive Behavioral Counseling (CBT) combined with self-management techniques was grounded in previous studies highlighting their effectiveness in enhancing emotional regulation, reflective thinking, and adaptive cognitive outcomes among students (Charan et al., 2025; Martyn-Nemeth et al., 2016). The ADDIE model was chosen because it aligns with the research objectives to develop and test a counseling e-module based on Cognitive Behavioral Counseling (CBT) and self-management techniques, which are theoretically based on constructivist learning principles and cognitive load theory. The stages included needs analysis through interviews, observations, and literature studies to understand student characteristics and needs. The e-module prototype design took into account instructional design principles and e-learning theory (Siemens, 2005). The research sample was selected based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, and stratified by gender, taking into account the principles of representation and internal validity of the study. The ADDIE steps were implemented as follows:

1. **Analysis:** A needs analysis was conducted through interviews, observations, and literature review to understand student characteristics and needs (Maslow's theory of needs). The results of the analysis were used to determine learning objectives, target audiences, and e-module content.

2. **Design:** Based on the analysis results, an e-module prototype was designed, taking into account instructional design principles (Gagne's Nine Events of Instruction) and e-learning theory. The structure of the e-module integrates CBT components such as cognitive restructuring and emotional awareness, alongside self-management stages including self-monitoring, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement, and strategic planning, as identified in prior literature. This

stage included the creation of a storyboard, learning flow, CBT counseling materials, and self-management techniques.

3. **Development:** The e-module prototype was developed into a test-ready product. Expert validation was conducted using the Lawshe model to ensure content validity and feasibility. The pre-test and post-test instruments were tested for reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha > 0.70$) and validity through expert review. An initial pilot test (with 10-20 students) was conducted to evaluate feasibility and obtain initial feedback. The e-module included interactive exercises, reflective journals, quizzes, and guided CBT self-management tasks to support learning objectives. The development stage emphasized translating theoretical CBT and self-management frameworks into practical learning activities, reflective exercises, and self-guided tasks within the e-module.

4. **Implementation:** The e-module was implemented through a limited trial (30-50 students) to test its practicality and effectiveness. Then, a full trial was conducted using a quasi-experimental design, with an experimental group (30-50 students using the CBT e-module) and a control group (30-50 students receiving conventional counseling/no intervention).

5. **Evaluation:** Data were collected through pre- and post-tests, observations, and student feedback during pilot and full trials. The effectiveness of the e-module was measured using pre- and post-tests in both groups. Data were analyzed using normality, homogeneity, and t-tests to determine whether there were significant differences in the improvement of Emotional and Spiritual Intelligence.

3. Results

The results of a preliminary study conducted on 20 students at the University of PGRI Mahadewa Indonesia showed that the level of spiritual intelligence and emotional intelligence of students is still in the moderate category, even tending to be low in several important indicators. In the aspect of spiritual intelligence, the self-awareness indicator obtained a score of 70,

indicating that students are beginning to understand the values of life, but are still inconsistent in their application. Meanwhile, the indicators of compassion and positive attitudes towards difficulties only achieved scores of 65 and 62, respectively, indicating that empathy and the ability to interpret life's challenges as a learning process are still minimal. The same thing is also seen in the indicator of a sense of purpose in life which obtained a score of 68, indicating that most students do not have a clear direction and purpose in life.

A similar situation was observed in students' emotional intelligence. While the self-awareness dimension scored 67, many students still experienced confusion in understanding their own feelings. The self-control and social skills dimensions ranked lowest, with scores of 62 and 61, respectively, indicating students' difficulty

controlling their emotions under academic pressure and a lack of initiative in building healthy social relationships. Yet, these two aspects are crucial for campus life and the process of adapting to life.

The findings as shown in the table emphasize the urgent need for further research capable of providing measurable and targeted intervention solutions to improve students' emotional and spiritual intelligence. e-module cognitive behavioral counseling with technique self-management is highly relevant as a strategic effort to help students recognize, manage, and develop their emotional and spiritual potential. This research is crucial so that universities focus not only on academic achievement but also play an active role in developing emotionally resilient students with a clear sense of meaning in life, as preparation for facing future challenges.

Table 1. Analysis Results

No	Dimensions	Average Score	Category	Observation Description
Spiritual intelligence				
1	Self-awareness	70/100	Currently	Students begin to understand the value of life but are not yet consistent
2	Mercy	65/100	Currently	Empathy and concern are still minimal in the campus social environment
3	Positive Attitude Towards Difficulties	62/100	Tends to be Low	Students are less able to interpret difficulties as learning
4	Sense of Purpose in Life	68/100	Currently	Some students feel they don't have a clear direction and purpose in life.
Emotional Intelligence				
1	Self-awareness	67/100	Currently	Still often confused about understanding my own feelings
2	Self-control	62/100	Tends to be Low	Difficulty controlling emotions under academic pressure
3	Self-Motivation	70/100	Currently	Good spirit and determination, but often inconsistent
4	Empathy	64/100	Currently	Still less sensitive to the feelings of others
5	Social Skills	61/100	Tends to be Low	Minimal initiative in building social relations

These findings indicate that students' emotional and spiritual intelligence are generally at moderate levels, with self-control, social skills, and positive coping attitudes particularly low, highlighting areas that need targeted intervention. In response to the phenomenon of the need for emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence at the student level, educational institutions, as seen in several previous studies, have begun to adopt innovative approaches such as group therapy, peer counseling, and telehealth (L. Zhou et al., 2024). They are also better equipping faculty and staff to recognize and support students experiencing hardship and are redesigning how they respond to crises. Many institutions are also beginning to integrate a broader culture of well-being into their policies and daily campus life. Kevin Shollenberger, vice provost for student health and well-being at Johns Hopkins University, stated that this increased demand has pushed institutions to think holistically and take a multifaceted approach to supporting students (Jones et al., 2022).

In this context, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy offers highly relevant solutions. Cognitive behavioral counseling, with a focus on changing negative thought patterns and behaviors. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a psychotherapy approach that aims to change negative thought patterns and behaviors that cause emotional and psychological problems (Calancea, 2022). Cognitive-behavioral counseling is based on the theory that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are interrelated, and that changes in any one of them can affect the others. Cognitive-behavioral counseling focuses on identifying and modifying negative or unrealistic thoughts and maladaptive behaviors to produce positive emotional and behavioral changes. Cognitive-behavioral counseling is expected to provide several benefits, such as helping students cope with the academic and social pressures they face (Auty et al., 2022). Research indicates that CBT interventions significantly improve students' emotion regulation and stress management skills, enabling them to apply adaptive cognitive and coping strategies in daily life settings (Gök & Uslu, 2025; Haramain & Boediman, 2024).

Given the increasing demand for mental health services and the limited capacity of counseling centers, cognitive-behavioral counseling-based e-modules can be an effective and flexible tool to support students' emotional and mental well-being. These e-modules allow for widespread access and independent use, providing a practical and scalable solution in the dynamic context of higher education. (Moore, 2011; Sari et al., 2022). E-module can be an effective tool to fill the gap in phenomena due to its flexible and easily accessible nature (Sutiani et al., 2022). E-module allows students to learn about emotional management and spiritual development anytime and anywhere, according to their needs and convenience. In line with this, previous research that applied cognitive behavioral counseling with e-module have found that the practice has been successful in improving the problem eating disorder (Hamadi et al., 2023). The study also found that cognitive-behavioral counseling with e-modules can be applied to all ages. Thus, e-modules can help students develop important skills that not only support their mental health but also improve academic performance and overall well-being.

4. Discussion

The results of a preliminary study of students at Universitas PGRI Mahadewa Indonesia indicate the urgency of improving emotional and spiritual intelligence, which is generally in the moderate category with important indicators tending to be low. This reflects the broader challenges facing modern students, including academic pressure, social demands, and future uncertainty, which contribute to stress and anxiety. Cognitive Behavioral Counseling (CBT) offers relevant solutions by identifying and changing negative thought patterns and teaching self-management skills. Consistent with prior studies, such as Satrio et al. (2023) and Sholahudin et al. (2025), our findings support the positive role of emotional and spiritual interventions in enhancing students' coping skills and prosocial behavior; however, this study extends previous work by implementing these interventions digitally through an e-module, allowing independent and flexible learning. The development of a CBT e-

module is important due to its accessibility, scalability, personalization, and cost-effectiveness, which allows for broad reach, self-paced learning, and tailoring to individual needs. This research is expected to make a significant contribution to understanding student needs, developing effective interventions, improving well-being, and providing policy recommendations for integrating emotional and spiritual intelligence development programs into higher education.

The results of a preliminary study involving 20 students at PGRI Mahadewa Indonesia University indicate an urgent need to improve students' emotional and spiritual intelligence. The data show that students' emotional and spiritual intelligence levels are generally in the moderate category, with several important indicators tending to be low. Spiritual intelligence. In the aspect of spiritual intelligence, self-awareness obtained a score of 70, indicating that students are beginning to understand life values, but are not yet consistent in applying them. The indicators of compassion (65) and positive attitudes towards difficulties (62) indicate that empathy and the ability to interpret life's challenges as a learning process are still minimal. A sense of purpose in life is also a concern, with a score of 68, indicating that most students do not yet have a clear direction and purpose in life.

Emotional intelligence. A similar condition is also seen in students' emotional intelligence. Self-awareness scored 67, but many students still experience confusion in understanding their own feelings. The dimensions of self-control (62) and social skills (61) ranked lowest, indicating students' difficulty in controlling emotions under academic pressure and minimal initiative in building healthy social relationships. These two aspects are very important in campus life and the self-adaptation process. Implications of the Findings These findings emphasize the urgent need for further research that can provide measurable and targeted intervention solutions to improve students' emotional and spiritual intelligence. The development of a cognitive-behavioral counseling e-module with self-management techniques is highly relevant as a

strategic effort to help students recognize, manage, and develop their emotional and spiritual potential.

Higher education institutions are responding to these needs with innovative approaches such as group therapy and peer counseling (L. Zhou et al., 2024). They are also better equipping faculty and staff to recognize and support students experiencing difficulties and are redesigning how they handle crises (Jones et al., 2022). Many institutions are also beginning to integrate a broader culture of well-being into their policies and daily campus life. The Relevance of Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling. In this context, Cognitive-Behavioral Counseling (CBT) offers a highly relevant solution. CBT is a psychotherapy approach that aims to change negative thought patterns and behaviors that lead to emotional and psychological problems (Calancea, 2022). The structured and practical approach of CBT allows students to learn stress and emotion management skills that can be applied in everyday life (Auty et al., 2022).

The potential of cognitive-behavioral counseling-based e-modules. Given the increasing demand for mental health services and the limited capacity of counseling centers, CBT-based e-modules can be an effective and flexible tool to support students' emotional and mental well-being. These e-modules allow for widespread access and independent use, providing practical and scalable solutions in the dynamic context of higher education (Moore, 2011; Sari et al., 2022). E-modules allow students to learn about emotional management and spiritual development anytime and anywhere, according to their needs and convenience (Sutiani et al., 2022). Previous research implementing CBT with e-modules has found that the practice successfully improves problems *eating disorder* (Hamadi et al., 2023). and can be applied to all ages. This research is important so that universities do not only focus on academic achievement but also play an active role in developing emotionally resilient students with a clear sense of meaning in life, as a preparation for facing future challenges. The development of a cognitive-behavioral counseling e-module with self-management

techniques is expected to be an effective and innovative solution for improving students' emotional and spiritual intelligence.

At PGRI Mahadewa Indonesia University, where the majority of students come from rural areas with lower-middle socioeconomic backgrounds, academic challenges are exacerbated by a lack of skills in managing emotions and finding meaning in life. Initial surveys indicate students struggle with exam stress, adapting to the campus environment, and building social relationships. This condition is related to emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2005), which encompasses self-awareness, self-control, and social skills. These are often suboptimal and manifest in behaviors such as irritability, withdrawal, and difficulty collaborating. Furthermore, spiritual intelligence (Zohar & Marshall, 2012), including value awareness, the ability to place problems in a broader context, and moral commitment, also needs to be improved because many students feel lost, easily discouraged, and lack a foundation in values, which impacts learning motivation and mental well-being. Research shows that higher levels of emotional self-efficacy are significantly associated with lower academic stress and improved stress coping strategies, where students with stronger self-efficacy perceive academic challenges as manageable rather than threatening (Harahap et al., 2024; Masri & Melhem, 2025; Nawawi, 2025; Thionata & Soetjningsih, 2023). Therefore, the development of cognitive behavioral counseling e-modules with self-management techniques is a relevant solution to improve students' emotional and spiritual intelligence, helping them grow in a balanced, resilient, and meaningful way.

Recent research highlights the importance of self-management group counseling models for enhancing moral intelligence and holistic student development. For example, the development of a self-management group counseling model has been shown to be effective in improving students' moral intelligence through systematic R&D procedures (Barida et al., 2019). In addition, studies on counseling guidance in educational settings have found that interventions designed to strengthen emotional

and spiritual intelligence, including value clarification and reflective coping, significantly contribute to students' psychological well-being and interpersonal skills (Sholahudin et al., 2025). There is also evidence that spiritual and emotional intelligence together play a role in shaping prosocial behavior, suggesting that integrated approaches in counseling and educational programs can strengthen both intra-personal and socio-emotional capacities ((Satrio et al., 2023). Furthermore, research on self-efficacy and moral development shows that intentional counseling and moral education strategies can enhance adolescents' moral judgment and social intelligence, underlining the value of structured counseling models for positive character outcomes (Warsah et al., 2024).

Through the urgency of this needs analysis, it can update the concept by combining Cognitive Behavioral Counseling with self-management techniques in the form of an e-module to improve students' emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence. Cognitive Behavioral Counseling is already known as an effective method for addressing emotional problems, but this research brings innovation by applying it to improve overall emotional and spiritual well-being. Furthermore, not much research has been conducted on the development of emotional intelligence and spiritual intelligence among students through digital-based counseling services, especially in Indonesia. This opens up new space in academic literature and educational practice.

In terms of methodology, this study offers a novel approach by modifying Cognitive Behavioral Counseling into an e-module that students can access independently, unlike the traditional format that typically requires face-to-face sessions. This method also introduces the integration of digital technology and therapeutic approaches, providing students with the flexibility to learn and develop emotional and spiritual management skills anytime and anywhere. The application of self-management methods in a counseling e-module is an innovation that has never been widely applied before in higher education contexts, thus

providing an affordable and practical solution to students' mental well-being issues.

5. Conclusion

Based on the analysis, it can be concluded that there is an urgency to develop effective interventions to improve the emotional and spiritual intelligence of students at PGRI Mahadewa Indonesia University. The average spiritual and emotional intelligence score show the "Moderate" category, with the indicator *Positive Attitude Towards Difficulties* (62/100) and *Social Skills* (61/100) and *Self-control* (62/100) is relatively low, indicating areas that need improvement. The cognitive behavioral counseling e-module with self-management techniques presents a relevant and potential solution, providing flexible, targeted, and relevant access. The development of this e-module is

expected to contribute to improving students' mental well-being, resilience, and overall quality of life, with a focus on improving scores on indicators that are still low.

The academic challenges faced by students are exacerbated by a lack of skills in managing emotions, finding meaning in life, and a lack of structured support. A cognitive-behavioral counseling e-module with self-management techniques emerged as a relevant and potential solution to address these needs, providing flexible, targeted, and relevant access to students' experiences. The development of this e-module is expected to contribute to improving students' mental well-being, resilience, and overall quality of life, as well as better preparing them to face academic and personal challenges.

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8. Author Declaration

8.1 Confirmation of Originality

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8.2 Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest in relation to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this work. No financial, personal, or professional relationships have influenced the design, conduct, analysis, or reporting of the study. Where applicable, all funding sources and institutional affiliations have been disclosed separately.