

Designing a Positive Psychological Self-Care Educational Package for Male Adolescents with High-Risk Behaviors

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present study aimed to design and validate a positive psychological self-care educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors.

Methods and Materials: This study was conducted using a qualitative applied research design based on grounded theory and thematic analysis. The study population included psychologists with direct professional experience working with adolescents with high-risk behaviors, theoretical and empirical literature related to positive psychology and psychological self-care, and university experts in psychology. Twenty-two psychologists working in counseling centers affiliated with the Department of Education in Tehran were selected through purposive sampling and participated in semi-structured interviews until theoretical saturation was achieved. In addition, domestic and international scientific sources related to positive psychology, self-care, emotion regulation, coping self-efficacy, and adolescent high-risk behaviors were reviewed and analyzed. Data collection tools included semi-structured interviews, a researcher-made content validity form, and an inter-rater agreement form. Data were analyzed through open, axial, and selective coding. After the educational package was developed, six faculty experts evaluated its content validity and overall quality.

Findings: The qualitative analysis resulted in the extraction of 60 initial codes, which were organized into 12 main categories, including communication establishment, emotion recognition, recognition of strengths, optimism, stress management, anger management, social skills, empathy, gratitude, meaning in life, spirituality, and resilience. These categories formed the conceptual and structural foundation of the final 12-session positive psychological self-care educational package. The package integrated emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, and resilience-oriented components designed to improve adolescents' psychological self-care capacities and coping resources. Content validity analysis showed that all extracted components achieved acceptable content validity ratios and were confirmed as essential by the expert panel. The inter-rater agreement coefficient also demonstrated a high level of expert consensus regarding the appropriateness, coherence, and applicability of the package.

Conclusion: The findings suggest that positive psychological self-care for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors should be conceptualized as a multidimensional process integrating emotional regulation, adaptive coping, interpersonal competence, optimism, meaning, spirituality, and resilience.

Keywords: *Positive psychological self-care, high-risk behaviors, male adolescents, educational package.*

1. Introduction

Adolescence is a developmental period in which rapid biological, cognitive, emotional, and social changes increase both vulnerability and opportunity. During this stage, the search for autonomy, heightened sensitivity to peer approval, identity formation, emotional reactivity, and experimentation with adult-like roles may expose adolescents to behaviors that threaten their psychological, social, educational, and physical well-being. High-risk behaviors in adolescence include a broad range of actions such as substance use, aggression, delinquency, unsafe peer involvement, self-harm tendencies, school disengagement, violence, and other behaviors that may produce immediate or delayed harm. Recent studies show that adolescent risk behaviors are rarely produced by a single factor; rather, they emerge from the interaction of personal, familial, peer-related, emotional, and social conditions (Chen, 2024; Guo et al., 2023; Reyes, 2025). Therefore, any preventive or educational intervention for adolescents with high-risk behaviors should be designed as a multidimensional package that addresses psychological self-care, emotion regulation, coping, interpersonal functioning, and positive developmental resources.

High-risk behavior among adolescents has become an important concern in mental health, education, juvenile justice, and public health. Studies on delinquency and substance use indicate that adolescents involved in risky or delinquent behaviors often show co-occurring psychological difficulties, family problems, peer influence, and emotional dysregulation (Arabaci et al., 2022; Tello, 2025). Substance use, in particular, is strongly associated with family and personal vulnerabilities, living in high-risk environments, peer exposure, and weak protective resources (İsmail et al., 2024; Reyes, 2025). Systematic evidence on addiction and risk behaviors in adolescence also confirms that such behaviors are embedded in broader patterns of psychological distress, impulsivity, sensation seeking, deficient coping skills, and social-contextual pressures (María del Mar Simón et al., 2025). These findings demonstrate that educational work with adolescents should not be limited to warning them about consequences; rather, it should provide practical self-care skills that help them manage internal states, make healthier decisions, and replace risk-oriented patterns with adaptive alternatives.

The psychological roots of adolescent risk behavior also require careful attention. Antisocial behavior in children and

adolescents is associated with emotional problems, cognitive distortions, family dysfunction, exposure to adversity, and deficits in self-regulation (Mazza et al., 2025). Adolescents who experience bullying, violence, trauma, or adverse family relationships may develop defensive, aggressive, avoidant, or impulsive behavior patterns, which may increase their likelihood of carrying weapons, engaging in aggression, or entering risky peer groups (Christensen et al., 2024; Ciurbea et al., 2021). Similarly, suicide risk, self-harm, and aggression in adolescents reflect the severe psychological burden that may accompany poorly regulated emotions and inadequate support systems (Chhabria & Khar, 2023; Delgado et al., 2024). These findings indicate that a positive self-care educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors should include components that directly address emotional awareness, anger management, stress management, help-seeking, and strengthening life-preserving psychological resources.

Emotion regulation is one of the central mechanisms linking adolescent vulnerability to risk behavior. Emotional dysregulation has been identified across a wide range of psychiatric and behavioral problems in children and adolescents, and it can intensify impulsive reactions, aggression, substance use, and maladaptive coping (Paulus et al., 2021). Longitudinal evidence also suggests that parenting, emotion regulation, and externalizing symptoms during adolescence can predict later health-risk behaviors in young adulthood (Herd et al., 2023). Studies among justice-involved populations further show that improvement in emotion regulation after trauma-informed cognitive-behavioral intervention is associated with reduced risk for recidivism (Dumornay et al., 2022). In addition, adverse childhood experiences appear to influence substance use partly through difficulties in emotional regulation, emphasizing the importance of teaching adolescents to recognize, tolerate, and manage emotional distress (Girard & Almeida, 2025). Therefore, emotion recognition and emotion regulation should be considered essential components of a psychological self-care package for adolescents with high-risk behaviors.

At the same time, intervention models for adolescents should not focus only on symptoms, deficits, and risk reduction. A growing body of literature emphasizes resilience, protective factors, hope, well-being, family support, and positive developmental assets as major elements in reducing adolescent vulnerability (Dray, 2021; Gubbels et al., 2023). Protective factors against youth

antisocial behavior include supportive relationships, adaptive coping, school engagement, self-control, emotional competence, and constructive social bonds (Gubbels et al., 2023). Early adolescence is also a critical period for shaping later risk and resilience, making this developmental stage a strategic point for prevention-oriented education (Shanahan et al., 2024). Hope has been identified as a protective factor associated with lower delinquency and lower posttraumatic stress symptoms, even in the presence of adverse childhood experiences (Sparks et al., 2021). These findings support the use of a positive psychology framework in which adolescents are not merely treated as risk carriers but are helped to identify strengths, develop hope, build resilience, and create meaningful future goals.

Positive psychological self-care can provide a useful framework for designing such a package. Self-care in this context refers to intentional psychological practices that help adolescents monitor their emotions, protect their mental health, regulate stress, strengthen coping, seek support, and maintain a positive relationship with themselves and others. School-based and well-being-oriented programs suggest that structured activities such as health diaries, reflective exercises, positive routines, and guided self-observation can improve adolescents' awareness and well-being (Rabaglietti et al., 2021). Resilience training has also been shown to influence emotional intelligence among at-risk students, indicating that structured educational interventions can improve psychological capacities that are directly relevant to self-care (Joulaei et al., 2022). In this regard, a positive self-care package should include practical activities such as emotional diaries, success notebooks, gratitude exercises, meaning-oriented reflection, relaxation, communication practice, and goal setting.

Evidence from psychosocial intervention research further confirms the need for structured, developmentally appropriate, and skills-based packages for adolescents. Psychosocial interventions for conduct problems emphasize the importance of targeting self-regulation, family and peer processes, social problem solving, and behavioral skills (Goulter & Fleming, 2023). Mindful coping interventions have demonstrated comparative benefits for reactive aggression and self-regulation, showing that combining coping training with awareness-based practices can be beneficial for youth with behavioral problems (Boxmeyer et al., 2021). Cognitive-behavioral and mindfulness-based interventions have also been examined among delinquent youth and have shown relevance for emotional and behavioral adjustment (Wong et al., 2022). Low-intensity

cognitive-behavioral interventions for delinquent youth likewise support the feasibility of structured psychological training in high-risk adolescent populations (Zhuang et al., 2021). These findings indicate that an educational package for self-care should be coherent, session-based, skill-oriented, and suitable for adolescents' developmental needs.

Trauma-informed and family-centered perspectives also highlight the importance of safety, support, and relational sensitivity in interventions for high-risk youth. Trauma-informed treatment models for youth violence and recidivism stress that adolescents with behavioral problems may have histories of adversity and need interventions that emphasize emotional safety, empowerment, and regulation rather than punishment alone (Zettler, 2020). Narrative reviews on justice-involved youth similarly show that trauma-informed care should consider the psychological impact of adversity and the need for responsive, developmentally appropriate services (Hill et al., 2023). Family strengthening psychosocial services for children in conflict with the law also indicate that support systems around the adolescent can play an important role in rehabilitation and well-being (Jangam et al., 2022). In designing a self-care package, these findings justify the inclusion of help-seeking, social support, empathy, assertiveness, and effective communication as components that connect individual self-care with interpersonal safety.

Intervention research among at-risk adolescents further supports empowerment-based and engagement-oriented approaches. Empowerment education has shown effectiveness in reducing substance use among inner-city adolescents, suggesting that adolescents benefit when programs increase agency, awareness, and practical decision-making skills (Ojonuba et al., 2023). Broader perspectives on adolescent development also emphasize that intervention practices should engage adolescents actively and address their overall development and well-being rather than focus narrowly on a single problem behavior (Mahapatro et al., 2025). Research on intervention strategies for relational aggression among juvenile offenders and at-risk youth also suggests that targeted psychosocial programs should include emotional, cognitive, and relational components (Magram et al., 2025). Therefore, the package designed in the present study should be understood as an empowerment-oriented educational program that aims to strengthen adolescents' internal and interpersonal resources for self-care.

The importance of peer relationships and social contexts should also be considered in the design of the package.

Adolescents' involvement in risky peer groups, cliques, gangs, and high-risk social networks can increase the likelihood of delinquency, aggression, and substance use (Ciurbea et al., 2021). Multi-level models of risk-taking behaviors indicate that adolescent risk trajectories are influenced by individual factors, peer contexts, family conditions, and social environments (Guo et al., 2023). Psychological security also appears to mediate the relation between childhood maltreatment and vulnerability to substance use disorders, highlighting the need to create internal safety and supportive interpersonal experiences (Shalchi et al., 2024). These findings support the inclusion of group-based exercises, empathy training, support-seeking, assertive communication, and resistance to negative peer pressure in the educational package.

In addition, the positive psychology approach offers specific content areas that are highly relevant to adolescents with high-risk behaviors. Hope, optimism, gratitude, meaning in life, recognition of strengths, self-acceptance, and resilience may function as protective psychological resources by helping adolescents reinterpret difficulties, regulate negative emotion, and orient themselves toward constructive goals. Adolescents with high-risk behaviors may often experience hopelessness, low self-worth, anger, loneliness, negative self-talk, or a weak sense of future. For this reason, the package should not only teach them how to avoid risk but also help them experience themselves as capable, valuable, and able to choose a different direction. Studies on resilience-focused intervention and adolescent well-being support the use of such strengths-based components to promote adaptive development (Dray, 2021; Rabaglietti et al., 2021). Therefore, the present package integrates positive exercises such as success recording, gratitude writing, best possible future visualization, identifying personal strengths, meaning exploration, and moral reflection.

Despite the growing evidence on adolescent risk behaviors and psychosocial interventions, there remains a need for culturally appropriate, qualitative, and theory-informed educational packages specifically designed for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors. Many existing interventions focus on treatment, delinquency reduction, substance use prevention, or trauma response, while fewer studies have attempted to develop a comprehensive positive psychological self-care package grounded in expert perspectives, theoretical literature, and the developmental needs of high-risk male adolescents. Moreover, because male adolescents may express distress through aggression,

impulsivity, peer-driven risk taking, resistance to help-seeking, and emotional suppression, a package designed for this group should include accessible, practical, and structured content that connects emotion regulation with coping self-efficacy, social competence, positive identity, meaning, gratitude, spirituality, and resilience. Such a package can create a preventive and developmental framework for helping adolescents recognize psychological needs, manage emotional challenges, strengthen protective resources, and reduce vulnerability to high-risk patterns.

Accordingly, the present study aimed to design a positive psychological self-care educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors based on qualitative analysis of theoretical sources, expert interviews, and specialist content validation.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study was applied in terms of purpose and qualitative in terms of research method. The qualitative phase was conducted using a grounded theory approach to identify the components required for designing a positive self-care educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors. Grounded theory was selected because the purpose of the study was not to test a pre-existing intervention, but to develop an educational package based on expert experiences, theoretical texts, and the psychological needs of adolescents with high-risk behaviors. The study context included psychologists who had direct professional experience with adolescents showing high-risk behaviors, valid scientific texts related to positive psychology, psychological self-care, adolescence, emotion regulation, coping self-efficacy, and high-risk behaviors, and university experts in psychology who evaluated the specialized validity of the designed package. Participants in the interview section were selected purposively from psychologists working in counseling centers affiliated with the Department of Education in Tehran in 2025. The inclusion criteria were direct professional interaction with adolescents with high-risk behaviors, having at least a master's degree in psychology or counseling, having at least five years of professional experience, and willingness to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria were unwillingness to continue participation and intentional avoidance in answering interview questions. Sampling continued until theoretical saturation was reached, and finally 22 psychologists were interviewed. In addition, to develop the educational package,

374 domestic and international sources, including books, articles, and theses published between 2010 and 2025, were initially reviewed using keywords related to positive psychology, psychological self-care, high-risk behaviors, adolescents, emotion regulation, and coping self-efficacy. After screening the sources based on credibility, relevance, and recency, 117 sources were studied, and finally 80 sources were selected for detailed analysis and use in package development. To validate the final package, six faculty members and academic experts in psychology from universities in Tehran were selected purposively for content evaluation.

2.2. Measures

The semi-structured interview was used as the main qualitative data collection tool to explore the views and experiences of psychologists regarding the psychological self-care needs of male adolescents with high-risk behaviors and the components required for designing a positive self-care educational package. The interview framework was prepared based on the research purpose, the principles of positive psychology, and the psychological characteristics of adolescents with high-risk behaviors. During the interviews, the questions were developed and completed according to the participants' responses, professional experiences, and the emerging concepts related to adolescents' emotional, behavioral, coping, and self-care needs. The interviews continued until theoretical saturation was achieved. In total, approximately 1015 minutes of interviews were recorded, transcribed, and prepared for qualitative analysis.

A researcher-made content validity ratio form was used to examine the necessity of the extracted components of the positive self-care educational package. In this form, the categories and components obtained from the interviews and literature review were presented to experts, and they were asked to evaluate each component based on its necessity for inclusion in the educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors. The expert judgments were used to determine whether each component was essential, relatively necessary, unnecessary, or should be removed from the package.

A researcher-made inter-rater agreement form was also used to evaluate the specialized validity of the designed educational package. This form was developed around the relevance of the sessions to the main purpose of the package, the adequacy of the time allocated to each educational component, and the overall quality of the designed package.

The experts evaluated the package using a four-point scale ranging from very weak to excellent. Their comments were used to revise and finalize the educational content of the positive self-care package.

2.3. Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analyzed using the grounded theory method. After completing the interviews, all recorded materials were transcribed verbatim and reviewed several times to achieve immersion in the data. The analysis process began with the extraction of meaningful statements and initial concepts from the interview texts and continued through open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. In open coding, the key concepts related to adolescents' psychological self-care, emotional needs, coping difficulties, high-risk behavioral tendencies, positive self-perception, hope, optimism, social skills, meaning, gratitude, and resilience were identified. In axial coding, the extracted codes were organized into broader categories based on conceptual relationships and their relevance to the design of the educational package. In selective coding, the main categories were integrated to form the final structure of the positive self-care educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors. Alongside the interview data, selected scientific sources were analyzed to strengthen the theoretical and practical foundations of the package. After the initial package was developed, its content validity was examined using the content validity ratio method, and the agreement among expert evaluators was calculated based on their ratings. The experts' corrective comments were applied, and the final version of the package was prepared based on the integrated findings from interviews, literature review, and expert validation.

3. Findings and Results

The findings were obtained through thematic analysis of the theoretical and empirical literature, semi-structured interviews with 22 psychologists who had direct professional experience with adolescents showing high-risk behaviors, and expert evaluation by six university faculty members in psychology. The qualitative analysis led to the extraction of core components related to psychological self-care, emotion awareness, coping skills, positive self-perception, optimism, gratitude, meaning, spirituality, and resilience. These components were then integrated into a 12-session educational package, and the final version was examined for content validity and expert agreement.

Table 1

Coding Results of the Qualitative Analysis

Main category	Extracted codes and subcategories	Function in the educational package
Establishing communication	Rapport, group safety, motivation for participation, explanation of group expectations, personal goal setting	Preparing adolescents for active participation and creating a safe educational atmosphere
Emotion recognition	Self-awareness, recognition of emotions, naming emotions, understanding the thought–emotion–behavior cycle, identifying emotional reactions	Helping adolescents understand their emotional experiences and their role in risky behaviors
Recognition of strengths	Identifying personal strengths, positive self-talk, self-acceptance, reducing self-blame, accepting mistakes	Strengthening positive self-perception and reducing negative self-evaluation
Optimism and hope	Positive future orientation, hope, optimistic thinking, visualization of the best possible future, reflection on positive daily experiences	Increasing adolescents’ motivation and belief in personal change
Stress management	Recognition of stressors, bodily awareness, relaxation, deep breathing, imagery, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping	Improving adaptive responses to stress and reducing ineffective coping
Anger management	Identifying anger triggers, recognizing physical and psychological signs of anger, countdown technique, healthy expression of anger, replacing irrational thoughts	Reducing impulsive reactions and strengthening controlled emotional responses
Social skills	Assertiveness, effective communication, asking for help, saying no, requesting support, interpersonal confidence	Improving communication competence and reducing vulnerability to peer pressure
Empathy and support	Understanding others’ emotions, perspective-taking, supportive behavior, writing supportive messages, observing others’ needs	Expanding prosocial behavior and strengthening interpersonal connectedness
Gratitude	Gratitude toward self, others, God, daily positive events, nature, and personal efforts	Enhancing positive emotion, appreciation, and emotional balance
Meaning in life	Identifying personal values, life goals, meaningful activities, future planning, small goal-directed steps	Strengthening purposefulness and reducing aimlessness in adolescents
Spirituality and moral values	Ethical behavior, spiritual awareness, connection with something beyond the self, gratitude letter, reflection on nature	Reinforcing moral orientation and inner psychological support
Resilience	Review of learned skills, psychological capital, persistence, use of skills in daily life, continuation of self-care practices	Consolidating learning and supporting long-term use of self-care skills

As shown in Table 1, the qualitative analysis resulted in 12 main categories that formed the conceptual foundation of the positive psychological self-care package. The extracted categories moved from basic readiness for participation and emotional self-awareness toward higher-level skills such as coping, empathy, gratitude, meaning, spirituality, and

resilience. This structure indicates that the package was designed as a developmental and progressive program in which adolescents first become familiar with themselves and their emotions, then learn adaptive coping and interpersonal skills, and finally move toward meaning-making, moral growth, and resilience.

Table 2

Positive Psychological Self-Care Educational Protocol for Male Adolescents with High-Risk Behaviors

Session	Goal	Content	Assignment
First	Creating a safe and friendly atmosphere for active participation; familiarizing participants with the goals and structure of the program; increasing motivation for learning psychological self-care skills	Explanation of the general goals of the program in simple language, including increasing the ability to manage emotions, stress, anger, and negative feelings; strengthening healthy coping skills and correct decision-making; increasing self-esteem, optimism, and meaning in life; creating healthier relationships; and learning to say no to high-risk behaviors	Preparing a success notebook, writing a motivational sentence for difficult situations, and selecting one personal goal to work on during the program
Second	Recognizing personal emotions, understanding the thought–emotion–behavior cycle, and understanding the role of emotions in resilience	Discussion of positive and negative emotions, their physiological, psychological, and social antecedents and consequences; explanation of the thought–emotion–behavior cycle; discussion of styles of dealing with emotions, including avoidance, emotional overinvolvement, and emotion regulation	Preparing an emotion diary, recording usual reactions to each emotion, and identifying personal styles of dealing with emotions
Third	Enhancing emotional self-awareness, identifying strengths, increasing positive self-attitude, reducing self-blame, and focusing on learning from mistakes	Emphasis on naming emotions and its importance in emotion regulation and resilience; discussion of successful experiences; helping participants reinterpret challenges; emphasizing that identifying strengths is an important step toward behavioral change and life redirection	Writing five positive sentences about oneself and using reinterpretation techniques when facing challenges

Fourth	Strengthening hope and optimism about the future, increasing the ability to imagine a positive future, and enhancing motivation and belief in personal influence over life conditions	Discussion of how a positive attitude toward self and life can help adolescents; explanation that the future can improve and that individuals can take steps toward that future; comparison of optimistic and pessimistic viewpoints; clarification that hope and optimism do not mean ignoring problems, but believing in the ability to overcome them	Writing three positive points about each day; imagining life five years later in education, occupation, relationships, and personal interests; and identifying actions needed to move toward that future
Fifth	Increasing awareness of the effects of stress, recognizing coping strategies, and using effective stress-management strategies in different situations	Introduction to stress and its physical, psychological, and behavioral effects; explanation of the stress cycle; training in emotion-focused coping strategies such as progressive muscle relaxation and imagery; explanation of problem-focused strategies such as identifying solvable problems, time management, and seeking help; discussion of stress-avoidance strategies such as setting boundaries and reducing stress triggers	Recording daily stressors, reactions to stress, and methods used to manage it; practicing relaxation techniques; noticing bodily changes such as muscle tension and heartbeat; and using body-listening techniques
Sixth	Identifying anger triggers, understanding anger, recognizing different responses to anger, and using healthy anger-management strategies	Explanation of anger in an age-appropriate manner; presenting anger as an opportunity for problem solving rather than destruction; helping participants identify physical and psychological signs of anger; and presenting practical strategies for anger control and management	Recording daily anger situations, practicing countdown and deep breathing, recording changes during the week, practicing healthy expression of anger, and replacing dominant negative thoughts with logical thoughts
Seventh	Teaching effective social skills, strengthening the ability to ask for help in difficult situations, and increasing interpersonal confidence	Training in social skills and assertiveness; practicing direct expression of feelings and needs without aggression or passivity; discussion of reasons for seeking help, including prevention of risky behaviors and stressful situations; and explanation of the steps of asking for help	Reporting one successful conversation using effective social skills; asking for help from a parent, teacher, or friend in a situation of need; and describing the experience
Eighth	Helping adolescents recognize others' emotions, understand others' perspectives, show supportive and empathic behavior, and learn practical ways of supporting others	Beginning the session with a short story or inspirational clip about empathy; discussion of the feeling created when someone shows support or empathy; explanation of empathy and its role in personal growth and relationship improvement	Using effective communication skills during the week and recording feelings about the experience; writing a short supportive message to someone who needs support; observing others' emotions and possible causes; and performing at least one supportive action
Ninth	Teaching the importance of gratitude, gratitude toward self, gratitude toward God, appreciation of positive events, and respect for nature	Practice of mental relaxation through deep breathing and imagery of nature; strengthening the ability to notice positive aspects and express gratitude through simple adolescent-friendly examples; explaining the effect of gratitude on emotion regulation and effective coping with challenges	Writing three things for which they are grateful every night; focusing on one element of nature and describing the received feeling; and expressing gratitude directly or in writing to one person during the week
Tenth	Increasing awareness of the importance of meaning and purpose in life, identifying personal values and priorities, and strengthening motivation to pursue goals and overcome obstacles	Explanation of how adolescents can strengthen motivation and find a meaningful life goal; discussion of personally valuable goals; and designing a plan for approaching meaningful goals	Writing about three things that give meaning to life, two goals they want to achieve in the future, and one small step they can take during the week to move closer to those goals
Eleventh	Strengthening moral values and orienting the adolescent toward spirituality	Beginning with an inspirational story or quote about moral values; brief explanation of moral values and spirituality as a sense of connection with something beyond the self; emphasis on how spirituality can help individuals live more meaningfully and make better choices; clarification that spirituality is not necessarily identical to religion	Performing one moral action every day, writing a gratitude letter, writing three things they are thankful for each night, spending time in nature once during the week, and describing its effect on spiritual feeling
Twelfth	Reviewing previous sessions, evaluating learning, motivating continuation of the path, encouraging the use of learned skills in daily life, increasing resilience, and creating a positive sense of appreciation for participants' efforts	Asking each participant to share one positive point learned or experienced during the sessions; explaining that the goal of the session is to summarize the material and prepare participants to use the skills in the future; reviewing the key points of previous sessions	Continuing the use of the success notebook and applying learned self-care skills in daily life

The protocol presented in Table 2 shows that the educational package was designed as a structured 12-session program centered on psychological self-care from a positive perspective. The first sessions focus on creating a safe group atmosphere, introducing the program, and preparing adolescents for participation. This beginning phase is

important because adolescents with high-risk behaviors may show resistance, distrust, low motivation, or negative attitudes toward structured psychological programs. Therefore, the first session was designed to increase engagement, clarify expectations, and help participants identify a personal goal for the training process.

The second and third sessions focus on emotional awareness and positive self-recognition. These sessions address the adolescent’s ability to identify emotions, understand the connection between thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and recognize personal strengths. Since high-risk behaviors are often associated with emotional dysregulation, impulsive responses, negative self-evaluation, and poor self-monitoring, these sessions were designed to create a foundation for later self-care skills. The assignments, including the emotion diary and writing positive sentences about oneself, were intended to transform the educational content into daily self-observation and self-reflection.

The fourth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh sessions represent the positive psychological core of the package. These sessions focus on optimism, hope, gratitude, meaning in life, moral values, and spirituality. In these sessions, the adolescent is guided to imagine a better future, identify meaningful goals, notice positive daily events, express gratitude, and reflect on values. These components were included because the qualitative findings showed that adolescents with high-risk behaviors need not only behavioral control skills, but also positive psychological resources that can increase motivation, self-worth, future orientation, and purposeful living.

The fifth and sixth sessions are directly related to stress and anger management. These sessions were designed to address two major emotional triggers involved in high-risk behaviors. The stress-management session includes recognition of stressors, bodily awareness, relaxation, imagery, and problem-focused coping. The anger-management session emphasizes identification of anger triggers, awareness of physical and psychological signs, controlled responding, and healthy expression of anger. These sessions translate psychological self-care into practical coping strategies that adolescents can use in daily stressful and provocative situations.

The seventh, eighth, and twelfth sessions emphasize interpersonal self-care and consolidation of learning. Social skills, assertiveness, asking for help, empathy, and supportive behavior were included because high-risk behaviors in adolescence are frequently shaped by peer pressure, poor communication, low help-seeking ability, and weak supportive relationships. The final session integrates all learned skills and encourages continued use of the techniques in everyday life. Therefore, the package moves from self-awareness to self-regulation, then to interpersonal competence, positive meaning-making, and resilience.

Table 3

Content Validity Results for the Components of the Educational Package

Component	Number of experts rating the component as essential	Content validity value	Content validity status
Establishing communication	6	1.00	Accepted
Emotion recognition	6	1.00	Accepted
Recognition of strengths	6	1.00	Accepted
Optimism	6	1.00	Accepted
Stress management	6	1.00	Accepted
Anger management	6	1.00	Accepted
Social skills	6	1.00	Accepted
Empathy training	6	1.00	Accepted
Gratitude	6	1.00	Accepted
Meaning in life	6	1.00	Accepted
Spirituality enhancement	6	1.00	Accepted
Resilience enhancement	6	1.00	Accepted

As shown in Table 3, all 12 extracted components were rated as essential by all six experts. Therefore, the content validity value for each component was 1.00, indicating full expert confirmation of the necessity and relevance of the components included in the package. Based on these results,

none of the components required removal, and all were retained in the final version of the positive psychological self-care educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors.

Table 4

Expert Agreement on the Positive Psychological Self-Care Educational Package

Evaluation criterion	Expert 1	Expert 2	Expert 3	Expert 4	Expert 5	Expert 6	Mean agreement percentage
Content compatibility of the sessions with emotion regulation in adolescents with high-risk behaviors	4	4	4	4	4	4	100
Content compatibility of the sessions with increasing coping self-efficacy in male adolescents with high-risk behaviors	4	4	4	3	4	4	95
Compatibility of the sessions with the elements of the positive psychology approach	4	3	4	4	3	4	91
Adequacy of session time for teaching each intended component	4	4	4	4	3	4	95
Content richness of the designed sessions for achieving the objectives	4	3	4	4	4	4	95
Overall evaluation of the psychological self-care educational package for adolescents with high-risk behaviors	4	3	4	4	3	4	91
Overall agreement							94.50

As presented in Table 4, the overall expert agreement regarding the desirability of the positive psychological self-care educational package was 94.50%. The highest level of agreement was related to the compatibility of the sessions with emotion regulation, which received 100% agreement. Other criteria, including compatibility with coping self-efficacy, adequacy of time, and content richness, also received high levels of agreement. The lowest agreement values were still high, at 91%, and were related to compatibility with positive psychology elements and the overall evaluation of the package. These results indicate that the experts considered the package to have acceptable structure, sufficient content richness, appropriate session timing, and strong relevance to the psychological needs of male adolescents with high-risk behaviors.

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to design a positive psychological self-care educational package for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors through qualitative analysis of theoretical literature, expert interviews, and content validation. The findings of the qualitative phase demonstrated that the final package was organized around twelve central components, including communication establishment, emotion recognition, recognition of strengths, optimism, stress management, anger management, social skills, empathy, gratitude, meaning in life, spirituality, and resilience. The extracted categories reflected both the psychological vulnerabilities and developmental needs of adolescents with high-risk behaviors and emphasized that psychological self-care in this group should be conceptualized as a multidimensional process integrating emotional, cognitive, interpersonal, moral, and resilience-

related capacities. The content validity findings further indicated that all extracted components were evaluated as essential by the panel of experts, and the high agreement coefficient among evaluators suggested that the package possessed acceptable conceptual coherence, structural appropriateness, and content richness for implementation among male adolescents with high-risk behaviors.

One of the most important findings of the present study was the central role of emotion recognition and emotion regulation within the structure of the package. During the qualitative analysis, many experts emphasized adolescents' difficulties in identifying emotions, expressing feelings, regulating anger, and coping with stress. This finding is consistent with evidence indicating that emotional dysregulation is one of the primary mechanisms underlying adolescent behavioral and psychological problems (Paulus et al., 2021). Adolescents with high-risk behaviors often respond impulsively to emotional distress, peer rejection, conflict, frustration, or insecurity, and these emotional responses may contribute to aggression, delinquency, substance use, and other maladaptive behaviors (Chhabria & Khar, 2023; Mazza et al., 2025). Similarly, longitudinal evidence has shown that emotion regulation difficulties during adolescence are associated with later health-risk behaviors and externalizing symptoms (Herd et al., 2023). Therefore, the inclusion of components such as emotion awareness, stress management, anger regulation, relaxation, mindfulness, and adaptive coping strategies in the present package appears theoretically and clinically justified.

The findings also highlighted the importance of positive self-concept, optimism, hope, and resilience as major themes in the designed package. Adolescents with high-risk behaviors frequently experience low self-esteem, hopelessness, negative self-evaluation, social rejection, or

feelings of inadequacy, which may intensify their vulnerability to risky behaviors. In response to these challenges, the package incorporated activities such as identifying strengths, positive self-talk, best possible future visualization, gratitude exercises, and recognition of daily positive experiences. These components align with resilience-oriented approaches emphasizing that strengthening internal psychological resources can reduce vulnerability and increase adaptive functioning (Dray, 2021; Gubbels et al., 2023). The findings are also consistent with studies demonstrating that hope functions as a protective factor against delinquency and psychological distress among adolescents exposed to adversity (Sparks et al., 2021). Similarly, resilience training has been associated with improvements in emotional intelligence among at-risk students, suggesting that positive psychological skills can strengthen adolescents' adaptive capacities (Joulaei et al., 2022). Consequently, the present package attempted to move beyond a purely deficit-focused perspective by helping adolescents experience themselves as capable, valuable, and able to create meaningful change in their lives.

Another important finding was the emphasis on social and interpersonal dimensions of self-care. The experts repeatedly stressed the need for teaching communication skills, assertiveness, help-seeking, empathy, support-giving, and resistance to negative peer pressure. Adolescents with high-risk behaviors often struggle with maladaptive peer relationships, interpersonal conflict, social rejection, or dependence on risky peer groups (Ciurbea et al., 2021). Peer influence and social context have also been identified as significant predictors of adolescent risk-taking behaviors (Guo et al., 2023). Therefore, strengthening interpersonal competence may function as an important protective factor against involvement in delinquency and risky social networks. The inclusion of empathy and social support components is also consistent with trauma-informed and resilience-oriented intervention models that emphasize relational safety and connectedness as central elements in adolescent rehabilitation and adjustment (Hill et al., 2023; Zettler, 2020). In this regard, the package attempted to create opportunities for adolescents not only to receive support but also to practice supportive and empathic behavior toward others.

The findings of the present study additionally emphasized the role of stress management and coping self-efficacy in adolescent self-care. Adolescents exposed to psychological pressure, family conflict, peer stress, or unsafe environments may lack adaptive coping mechanisms and may instead rely

on aggression, avoidance, impulsive behavior, or substance use. Research has shown that family, social, and psychological vulnerabilities contribute significantly to adolescent substance abuse and risk behavior (İsmail et al., 2024; Reyes, 2025). Furthermore, childhood maltreatment and psychological insecurity have been associated with greater vulnerability to substance use disorders (Shalchi et al., 2024). For this reason, the package incorporated coping-oriented strategies such as problem solving, stress awareness, breathing exercises, emotional coping, and help-seeking behaviors. These findings are also compatible with evidence indicating that empowerment-based interventions and coping-oriented educational approaches can reduce substance use and improve adolescent functioning (Ojonuba et al., 2023). In addition, interventions that strengthen coping and emotional regulation among justice-involved youth have been associated with reduced recidivism and improved behavioral adjustment (Dumornay et al., 2022).

The qualitative findings also suggested that adolescents with high-risk behaviors require opportunities for meaning-making, spirituality, and moral reflection. Experts repeatedly referred to adolescents' need for purpose, values, connection, gratitude, and internal guidance. Accordingly, the package included components related to meaning in life, gratitude toward self and others, spirituality, moral action, and reflection on life goals. Such components are particularly important because adolescents who experience hopelessness, social alienation, or identity confusion may become vulnerable to destructive behaviors when they perceive life as meaningless or disconnected from personal values. The literature increasingly supports the idea that adolescent interventions should promote overall well-being and developmental engagement rather than merely suppress problematic behavior (Mahapatro et al., 2025). Positive developmental frameworks similarly emphasize that resilience and healthy adaptation are strengthened when adolescents develop purpose, connection, and meaningful future orientation (Shanahan et al., 2024). Therefore, integrating meaning-centered and gratitude-based exercises into the package may help adolescents develop stronger psychological motivation for self-care and behavioral change.

The present findings are also consistent with intervention studies demonstrating the usefulness of structured psychosocial and cognitive-behavioral approaches for delinquent and at-risk youth. Studies comparing cognitive-behavioral therapy, mindfulness-based interventions, and supportive counseling among delinquent adolescents have

shown beneficial effects on emotional and behavioral functioning (Wong et al., 2022). Mindful coping interventions have similarly demonstrated improvements in aggression control and self-regulation (Boxmeyer et al., 2021). Low-intensity cognitive-behavioral interventions for delinquent youth also support the applicability of structured psychological programs in high-risk adolescent populations (Zhuang et al., 2021). In addition, psychosocial interventions for conduct problems emphasize the importance of self-regulation, communication, coping, and emotional skills in behavioral adjustment (Goulter & Fleming, 2023). The present study extends this body of literature by designing an integrated package specifically centered on positive psychological self-care for male adolescents with high-risk behaviors.

Another important aspect of the findings concerns the multidimensional and integrated nature of the package. Rather than focusing exclusively on one domain such as substance use, aggression, or emotional symptoms, the package attempted to address the broader psychological ecology of adolescent risk behavior. Existing literature shows that adolescent high-risk behavior is shaped by interactions among family conditions, peer influences, psychological vulnerability, trauma exposure, emotional dysregulation, and environmental pressures (Chen, 2024; María del Mar Simón et al., 2025). Trauma-informed reviews have further shown that adolescents involved in violence or delinquency frequently require interventions that acknowledge emotional pain, relational insecurity, and developmental needs (Hill et al., 2023; Zettler, 2020). Consequently, the package developed in this study attempted to combine emotional regulation, interpersonal competence, resilience, self-awareness, optimism, spirituality, and coping into one coherent educational framework.

The content validation results also provide support for the relevance and appropriateness of the designed package. All twelve components received full content validity approval from the experts, and the high agreement coefficient among evaluators indicated strong consensus regarding the adequacy and coherence of the sessions. This finding suggests that the package successfully integrated theoretically meaningful and clinically relevant elements for adolescents with high-risk behaviors. The high level of agreement concerning emotion regulation, coping self-efficacy, positive psychology principles, and session adequacy indicates that the package was perceived as developmentally appropriate and practically applicable. This

is particularly important because intervention effectiveness often depends not only on theoretical foundations but also on cultural appropriateness, comprehensibility, and relevance to adolescents' lived experiences (Magram et al., 2025; Mahapatro et al., 2025).

5. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of the present study suggest that psychological self-care for adolescents with high-risk behaviors should be understood as a holistic and strengths-oriented developmental process. Adolescents exposed to risk require more than behavioral restriction or symptom management; they require opportunities to build emotional awareness, positive identity, supportive relationships, adaptive coping, meaning, and resilience. By integrating positive psychological principles with emotion regulation, coping skills, interpersonal development, and resilience-building strategies, the present package attempted to provide a comprehensive educational framework that addresses both the vulnerabilities and growth capacities of male adolescents with high-risk behaviors.

6. Limitations & Suggestions

One limitation of the present study was that the package was designed primarily based on qualitative analysis and expert evaluation, and the findings were therefore limited to conceptual development and content validation. In addition, the participants in the interview phase consisted mainly of psychologists working with adolescents in Tehran, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other cultural or regional contexts. Another limitation concerns the focus on male adolescents with high-risk behaviors, meaning that the package may not fully reflect the developmental experiences or psychological needs of female adolescents or other adolescent populations. Furthermore, although extensive theoretical and empirical sources were reviewed, the study did not examine long-term implementation barriers, family participation challenges, or school-level contextual factors that may influence the practical application of the package.

Future research is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of the present package using experimental and longitudinal designs among different groups of adolescents. Researchers may also compare the effects of the package with other intervention models such as cognitive-behavioral, mindfulness-based, or resilience-focused approaches. Additional studies could investigate the role of mediating

variables such as family functioning, psychological security, peer support, or emotional intelligence in the outcomes of positive self-care interventions. It is also recommended that future studies adapt and validate the package for female adolescents, younger adolescents, school populations, or adolescents involved in juvenile justice systems. Moreover, qualitative follow-up studies examining adolescents' lived experiences of participating in the package may contribute to refinement and contextual improvement of the intervention.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that schools, counseling centers, and adolescent mental health services may benefit from integrating positive psychological self-care training into preventive and supportive programs for high-risk youth. The package developed in this study may provide psychologists, school counselors, and mental health practitioners with a structured framework for promoting emotional awareness, coping skills, optimism, resilience, and healthy interpersonal functioning among adolescents. Training programs for parents and teachers may also be designed alongside adolescent interventions in order to create supportive relational environments that reinforce self-care practices. Finally, policymakers and educational authorities may consider implementing preventive mental health programs based on positive psychology and self-care principles in schools and youth centers to reduce adolescent vulnerability and strengthen psychological well-being.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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