

Mitigating Adolescent Mythomania through Kindness-Based Pedagogy: Lessons Learned from Rural School

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article History: Received: October 25, 2025 Revised: November 11, 2025 Accepted: December 3, 2025</p> <p>Keywords: adolescent mythomania; kindness-based pedagogy; humanistic education; empathy</p>	<p>Mythomaniac behavior among adolescents is a serious issue in the educational world because it is often perceived as being overcome solely through rewards and punishments. This research aims to understand how kindness-based pedagogy can be used to reduce mythomaniac behavior in adolescents, particularly at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School, a school located in a rural area with a strong religious background. This study employed a qualitative method with a case study design, utilizing data sources that included students, teachers, and school documents. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and documentation. Analysis is carried out through reduction, grouping, and narrative interpretation. The results show that five kindness strategies, such as empathetic listening, loving correction, exemplary kindness, peer support through kindness circles, and reflective practice with gratitude and kindness journals, are effective in creating a safe emotional atmosphere, fostering lies, and reducing students' propensity to lie. This research contributes to the development of humanist pedagogical literature by providing a more empathetic, relevant, and sustainable approach compared to traditional models.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Mythomania, or mythomaniac behavior, among adolescents is a social issue that is increasingly being addressed in the field of education. Teens who tend to create repetitive lies often do so as a means of coping with peer pressure or to avoid academic stress.¹ So far, teachers have tended to use reward and punishment methods to deal with this behavior.² While this method can create order on the surface, it has not captured the psychological dimension that drives teens to continue lying. This situation highlights the need for a more comprehensive approach and underscores the emotional aspects of students.

In this context, kindness strategies emerge as a significant option that teachers can apply to address mythomania. Through empathy, exemplary kindness, and loving correction, teachers can help students feel accepted without relying on dishonesty.³ This method helps teenagers understand that honesty is more valuable and is highly regarded by society. Therefore, the application of kindness strategies by teachers is not only a complement to rewards and punishments, but also a more effective and sustainable solution for creating a healthy school atmosphere and supporting the development of honest character among adolescents.⁴

Previous research has shown that teaching methods oriented towards empathy and kindness have a more significant effect compared to the usual reward-and-punishment approach. Studies of compassionate pedagogy emphasize the importance of empathy from teachers, as well as compassionate actions, in creating a classroom environment that fosters students' social and emotional development.⁵ Additionally, research on reflective practices based on gratitude indicates that expressing gratitude is effective in reducing stress, enhancing mental health, and promoting prosocial behaviors.⁶ On the other hand, meta-analyses of social-emotional learning (SEL) and peer-led interventions have highlighted the crucial role of social-emotional skills, as well as peer support, in fostering honesty and social responsibility.⁷ The main similarities between the findings and this study are the emphasis on kindness as a foundation in education; however, the difference lies in the focus of this study,

¹ Joyce Komesuor et al., "Forgiveness among Ghanaian Children and Early Adolescents in the Context of Peer-to-peer Dyads," *Personal Relationships* 30, no. 3 (2023): 825-853, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/per.12484>.

² Ahmad Almafahir and Abdul Wahid, "Implementation of Reward and Punishment System in Increasing the Effectiveness of Student Behavior," *Educational Policy and Management Review* 1, no. 1 (2024): 1–14.

³ Rasnayaka M Mudiyanse et al., "Empathy Education in Schools as Primordial Prevention of Antisocial Behaviours," in *Education and Pedagogical Experiences* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2025), 43–55, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003546092-5>.

⁴ Hawwin Muzakki, Moh. Arif, and Manavavee Mamah, "Integration of Islamic Education Values and Fiqh Al-Bi'ah in Cultivating Environmentally Responsible Character," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan dan Kemasyarakatan* 23, no. 1 (2025): 55–70, <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v23i1.10272>.

⁵ Charlotte Silke et al., "Activating Social Empathy: An Evaluation of a School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Programme," *Social and Emotional Learning: Research, Practice, and Policy* 3 (2024): 100021, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2023.100021>.

⁶ Erin M. Fekete and Nathan T. Deichert, "A Brief Gratitude Writing Intervention Decreased Stress and Negative Affect During the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Journal of Happiness Studies* 23, no. 6 (2022): 2427–2448, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-022-00505-6>.

⁷ Christina Cipriano et al., "The State of Evidence for Social and Emotional Learning: A Contemporary Meta-Analysis of Universal School-Based SEL Interventions," *Child Development* 94, no. 5 (2023): 1181–1204, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13968>.

which explicitly explores the phenomenon of mythomania among adolescents in rural schools using a kindness-based pedagogical approach as a means to effect change.

The focus of this research is to understand the kindness-based pedagogical approach in overcoming mythomaniac behaviors among adolescents, which is often seen as being resolved only through a reward-and-punishment system. Social reality shows that the mythomania exhibited by adolescents is not just deviant behavior, but also an adaptive strategy to attract attention, gain recognition, or avoid pressure in the educational context.⁸ Therefore, it is essential to analyze how educators can implement strategies that are empathetic and compassionate and provide examples of good behavior during the teaching-learning process. The uniqueness of this research's focus lies in the school environment of rural areas, where the relationship between teachers and students is more intimate and rich in religious values, thereby increasing the likelihood that kindness will be embedded in the daily lives of students.

This study examines a kindness-based pedagogy approach to addressing mythomania among adolescents, a behavior often perceived as resolvable only through reward-and-punishment systems. Previous research has primarily focused on mythomania as deviant behavior, neglecting its adaptive nature as a strategy to gain attention, recognition, or avoid pressure, particularly in educational settings. Building on studies that emphasize behavior modification through disciplinary measures, this research critiques conventional approaches and introduces a more empathetic and humanistic method. The unique aspect of this study is its focus on a rural school environment, where the teacher-student relationship is closer and enriched by religious values, thereby providing greater opportunities for kindness-based strategies to take root in students' daily lives. This study contributes to the existing literature by exploring how kindness, empathy, and role modeling can offer more sustainable solutions to adolescent mythomania, in contrast to the emphasis on punitive measures found in other research.

Furthermore, this study reveals the uniqueness of applying kindness-based pedagogy to overcome mythomania among students at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School, which shows differences in dynamics when compared to other schools. Observations conducted in the field suggest that some students often create exaggerated narratives in an attempt to find their identity and gain social recognition, which can lead to symptoms of mythomania. Teachers in this school not only rely on rewards and punishments, but also begin to integrate kindness strategies that include empathy, compassion in nurturing, and setting a moral example in daily interactions. It is assumed that through this approach, students will feel valued in their authentic state, thereby reducing the desire to lie. The religious village environment also strengthens the learning process of the value of honesty, as students are accustomed to considering kindness as part of moral and spiritual practices. Therefore, this study proposes that kindness-based pedagogy can be an effective and sustainable solution to reduce adolescent mythomania at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School.

⁸ Ozan Can Yılmaz and Giray Saynur Derman, "The Reality Paradox: Controversies, Reflections, and Responsibilities," *International Journal of Social and Economic Sciences* 13, no. 1 (2023): 32–45.

RESEARCH METHOD

The objective of this research is to investigate the behavior of mythomania among adolescents and the application of kindness-based pedagogy at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School, Probolinggo, East Java, Indonesia. Mythomania is defined as the tendency for students to repeatedly lie, both in academic and social contexts, as a means to gain attention, recognition, or protection from the pressures surrounding them.⁹ This research focused on students as the primary subjects, while emphasizing the role of teachers in creating a humanist classroom atmosphere. Therefore, the focus of this research is not only limited to individuals with mythomania behaviors, but also includes interactions between teachers and students, as well as learning patterns formed through the application of kindness-based pedagogy.

This research employed a qualitative approach, utilizing a case study design.¹⁰ This method was chosen because it is suitable for investigating social phenomena in depth, focusing on the meaning and experiences experienced by the research subject.¹¹ The case study is relevant because this research is centered on Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School, located in Krejengan District, Probolinggo, allowing researchers to thoroughly examine the dynamics of mythomania among adolescents and the teaching methods employed by teachers. The selection of case studies is also based on their ability to depict the complex, information-rich, and related realities of schools in rural areas. In this way, the phenomenon of mythomania is understood not only as an individual behavior but also as a social phenomenon influenced by interactions and educational values.

The sources of data used in this study are categorized into three main groups.¹² First, the primary respondents were students at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School, who exhibited the nature of mythomania in both academic and social aspects. Second, key informants include subject teachers, counseling guidance teachers, homeroom teachers, and principals who play a direct role in supporting students. Third, school documents, such as regulations, counseling records, student reflections, and policy archives, serve as additional data. The combination of primary and secondary data allows triangulation, thereby increasing the validity of the research results. With a diverse selection of sources, research can provide a comprehensive picture of how Kindness-Based Pedagogy contributes to the treatment of mythomania.¹³

Information collection was conducted through three primary methods: in-depth interviews, participatory observations, and document analysis.¹⁴ Interviews were conducted

⁹ Iosif Tamaş, "Mythomania—Our Truth Is Not a Lie," *Integrative Psychiatry Newsletter* 91, no. 4 (2021): 109–118.

¹⁰ Rizal Safarudin et al., "Qualitative Research," *Innovative: Journal of Social Science Research* 3, no. 2 (2023): 9680–94.

¹¹ Yoki Yusanto, "Various Qualitative Research Approaches," *Journal of Scientific Communication (Jsc)* 1, no. 1 (2020).

¹² Abd Mukhid, *Research Methodology Quantitative Approach* (Surabaya: Jakad Media Publishing, 2021).

¹³ Aisyah Sekar Sari, Nadia Aprisilia, and Yessi Fitriani, "Data Collection Techniques in Qualitative Research: Observation, Interview, and Triangulation," *Indonesian Research Journal on Education* 5, no. 4 (2025): 539–45.

¹⁴ Md Kausar Alam, "A Systematic Qualitative Case Study: Questions, Data Collection, NVivo Analysis and Saturation," *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal* 16, no. 1 (2021): 1–31, <https://doi.org/10.1108/QROM-09-2019-1825>.

with teachers and students to explore experiences related to mythomania and kindness strategies. The questions asked are open-ended to encourage the emergence of personal narratives. Observations are conducted in the classroom environment and during non-formal activities to capture genuine interactions between teachers and students. The documents analyzed included academic records, counseling archives, and student reflections, which supported existing information. All of these stages occur repeatedly until the data is deemed to be saturated. By combining these various techniques, this research was able to obtain data that was diverse, valid, and relevant to the school context.

Data analysis in this study involved three main stages: reduction, categorization, and narrative interpretation.¹⁵ In the reduction step, relevant data from interviews, observations, and documents were selected and compiled into field notes. Next, categorization grouped the data into different themes, such as empathy, compassionate correction, modeling, and peer support. The narrative interpretation process aimed to link the findings to the theory of kindness-based pedagogy, adolescent psychology, and the socio-religious context in rural schools. The analysis is iterative, producing a deep and reflective understanding.¹⁶ of the phenomenon of mythomania and its underlying pedagogical mechanisms. In this study, mythomania is understood not just as deviant behavior but as an adaptive strategy used by adolescents to seek attention, avoid pressure, or gain recognition within educational settings. Kindness-based pedagogy refers to a teaching approach that emphasizes empathy, compassion, and positive role modeling, offering an alternative to traditional punitive methods. The rural school context, where teacher-student relationships are closer and enriched by socio-religious values, provides a unique setting for embedding such pedagogical strategies in daily student life. These concepts collectively form the basis for understanding how kindness-based pedagogy can help address mythomania in adolescents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Empathy-Based Listening

One of the kindness strategies applied at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School is listening with empathy. The Counseling Guidance Teacher stated that many students who lie often only need attention and the opportunity to be heard. When teachers create an atmosphere of listening to their problems patiently, students become more open and willing to explain the reasons behind their lies. Teachers do not need to show anger over mistakes or violations. With the teacher's attention, students feel valued, so their need to seek recognition through false stories is reduced. The following is the statement of the Counseling Guidance teacher:

"Many students basically just want to be heard. When I listen to their problems patiently, without showing anger, they tend to become more open. From there, I can understand what lies beneath their claims. Generally, children who feel cared for no longer often make up stories that are not true." (BK,

¹⁵ Stine Grodal, Michel Anteby, and Audrey L. Holm, "Achieving Rigor in Qualitative Analysis: The Role of Active Categorization in Theory Building," *Academy of Management Review* 46, no. 3 (2021): 591–612, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2018.0482>.

¹⁶ Britt-Marie Lindgren, Berit Lundman, and Ulla H. Graneheim, "Abstraction and Interpretation during the Qualitative Content Analysis Process," *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 108 (2020): 103632, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2020.103632>.

August 25, 2025)

Based on the interview results, it can be concluded that the tendency of students to lie actually reveals their need for attention from teachers. This is because the lies they tell are an attempt to gain recognition and sympathy from their environment. By allowing time for students to express their complaints to teachers, students will feel that they no longer need to lie to gain respect from teachers. Even students will choose to speak honestly and as they are, rather than lie. Thus, this condition suggests that mythomania among students is not merely an isolated occurrence but is also linked to unmet emotional needs. This is also conveyed by students: *"I now dare to admit my mistake because the teacher is no longer angry and does not immediately give punishment."* (SW, August 25, 2025)

Based on the interview results, it can also be inferred that the teacher has prepared a special reflection room, enabling students to share their personal experiences and problems openly and honestly. This situation has created a sense of security and comfort for students, as they feel that they are not being judged. Additionally, it can be observed that the more attention the teacher gives, the less likely students are to lie. Thus, the approach of listening with sympathy not only helps students reduce the habit of lying but can also increase the level of trust between teachers and students, which is the basis for alleviating mythomania.

The primary reason students feel the need to be heard is that they want their existence and experiences to be acknowledged by the environment, especially by their teacher, who is a significant figure in their school. When these needs are not met, they seek alternative means, such as lies, to attract attention. However, with an empathic listening approach, students feel valued without the need to lie. This suggests that listening with empathy serves as a prevention strategy that addresses the root of mythomania, namely, the need for attention, recognition, and social acceptance.

Compassionate Correction

The results of the study on the application of loving correction reveal that the teachers at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School attempt to respond to their students' lies with a gentle and loving attitude. Teachers do not immediately impose harsh punishments or reprimands; instead, they prefer to have a personal dialogue with students, allowing them to express the truth comfortably without fear. This method aims to correct mistakes and also to create a sense of security so that students do not feel humiliated. This is clear from the following homeroom teacher's statement:

"If any students lie, I will not scold them. However, I would usually ask gently about what was really going on. For example, when students fail to complete their schoolwork or do not wear uniforms according to the provisions. They sometimes feel scared and ashamed, but in the end, the student admits what really happened. I have also always taught that the most important thing is the courage to tell the truth. ' This way, they feel safer and are not afraid to open up." (WK, August 25, 2025)

The homeroom teacher at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School explained that he handles students who lie by inviting gentle and patient discussions, rather than scolding or giving harsh punishments. In practice, teachers prefer to ask questions in a calm tone so that

students feel comfortable and are encouraged to express themselves. Although students may initially feel embarrassed or reluctant to tell the truth, they eventually dare to reveal it after gaining moral support from the teacher. The teacher also emphasized that making mistakes is not something forbidden, as long as there is the courage to admit and correct them. So that students will feel more comfortable and appreciated, and are more likely to tell the truth, which in the next stage can reduce the need for the martial mechanism in the form of lies.

The results of the interviews indicate that students are more likely to admit to lies when teachers employ a compassionate correction approach. Corrections made through personal dialogue create an atmosphere of calm interaction and no intimidation. The teacher chooses to sit with the students, ask open-ended questions, and listen to the students' answers with a cheerful face. This creates a sense of security that students need to express themselves honestly. With this approach, students feel directed to correct mistakes and are also rewarded as individuals who are learning. This condition shows that honest behavior is not only based on school rules, but also on the positive emotional experiences provided by teachers. This pattern suggests that the interpersonal relationship between teachers and students plays a significant role in reducing students' tendency to lie.

The findings from the interviews also show that the application of motivational sentences in the correction process has a significant influence on the development of students' honest behavior. The motivational sentence from the teacher was like, "the most important thing is to dare to be honest even if you are wrong". This sentence, although simple, can give students confidence that they will still be appreciated even if they make mistakes. Under such conditions, students will be encouraged to admit mistakes without fear of retribution and will be motivated to correct them. Thus, *this compassionate correction* has helped build confidence, instilled the courage to be honest, and increased awareness that mistakes are an integral part of the learning process.

The success of Compassionate Correction in addressing students' mythomaniac behaviors can be attributed to its ability to meet students' basic emotional needs. This is because students do not want to be embarrassed in front of their teachers or friends; therefore, punishment will only lead to fear, defensiveness, and even the creation of new lies to cover up previous ones. Conversely, when teachers lovingly respond to lies, students feel there is a safe space to admit their mistakes. This situation allows them to learn to be responsible without feeling ashamed. Therefore, this corrective approach is more effective because it not only stops the lies from surfacing but also addresses the root of the problem: the need to be respected, heard, and treated with acceptance. For this reason, *Compassionate correction* deserves to be seen as one of the important strategies in *kindness-based pedagogy to overcome mythomania in adolescents*.

Kindness Modeling

Teachers at SMA Islam Miftahul Ulum emphasized the importance of setting a good example in daily activities as part of implementing an effective strategy. They realize that students will usually imitate the behavior of adults who are considered influential to them, so teachers strive to be honest, humble, and kind in their interactions. For example, teachers consistently demonstrate fairness in acknowledging minor mistakes in front of students, in

their assessment practices, and in their interactions with each student, regardless of their background. In addition, they also invite respected community leaders, such as village ustaz and community leaders, to school events to provide real examples of how the values of honesty and kindness are implemented in daily life. In this way, students not only hear the theory of honesty but also witness its application directly through the example given by the teacher and the environment around them. The principal explained that:

“Teachers should not only give orders to students, but should also be a good example for them. Do not feel embarrassed to admit mistakes in front of students. The teacher's actions are usually immediately followed by the students.” (KS, August 25, 2025)

From the interview results, a notable pattern emerges: students are more likely to understand the importance of honesty when they see teachers as consistent role models. Teachers who are always open and fair manage to cultivate respect from students, so they are encouraged to emulate their actions. For example, some students admit to quitting lying after seeing that their teacher also dares to make their own mistakes in class. This suggests that a teacher's honesty also has a psychological impact, influencing student behavior. Thus, kindness modeling functions as a reflection of the values taught and the behavior practiced. Thus, tangible examples of religious values in daily life have a substantial impact on learning outcomes.

In addition to the role of teachers, the role of local figures in providing kindness modeling is also a factor that encourages honesty among students. This is as conveyed by the Principal, who notes that school events featuring community leaders provide an opportunity for students to see firsthand behavior that aligns with their religious values. For example, when a community leader gives a lecture at a religious event that emphasizes the importance of honesty in daily life, students will also be able to see how the community leader is respected for consistently upholding honesty. Thus, kindness modeling has a significant impact on creating a learning environment that fosters the growth of honest behavior naturally and sustainably.



Figure 1. Maulid event at Mushollah Miftahul Ulum

The success of kindness modeling in reducing mythomania among adolescents can be understood through social learning theory, which suggests that children are more effective learners through observation and imitation. Students who see teachers or public figures

showing an honest and loving attitude tend to adjust their behavior to align with the person they are emulating. This answers why setting an example is more effective than punishing: because the student feels there is an alignment between the values being taught and the actual actions taken by the adult. Thus, kindness modeling not only superficially shapes honest behavior but also instills a strong belief that honesty is part of a social and moral identity that must be maintained and applied in daily life.

Peer Support through Kindness Circle

The formation of small groups or circles of kindness in the classroom is one of the effective strategies at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School to reduce students' tendency to lie in order to be accepted by their peers. In this activity, students are invited to offer genuine appreciation to one another every week and share stories without fear of judgment. The rule applied is "*no judgment, only kindness*," so that every student feels safe to speak as they are, and there is no fear of being bullied by their friends. Teachers act as facilitators who ensure the atmosphere remains positive, while students support each other through friendly and appreciative speech. This approach fosters a sense of community and makes students aware that group acceptance can be achieved through honesty and healthy social relationships, rather than through deception. As stated by the PAI Teacher:

"This kindness circle activity is beneficial. The rules of the game are 'no judgment, only kindness'. They share stories with honesty. Initially, there were indeed some students who often exaggerated stories, perhaps to appear impressive to their friends. However, after participating in this kindness circle activity several times, they began to exhibit noticeable improvements. They have begun to dare to admit their shortcomings without fear of being laughed at." (GM, August 25, 2025)

Based on the results of the interviews, a pattern emerges where students who previously tended to lie to attract friends' attention begin to show positive changes after participating in kindness circle activities. To illustrate, a student who often exaggerates stories about his achievements changes his attitude after participating in several sharing activities, where he begins to be more honest about his abilities. This shows that a good social environment will encourage students to express their truth without worrying about losing acceptance from their peers. In the circle of kindness, every student has the opportunity to be appreciated, regardless of the significance of their contribution. Thus, peer support in a group atmosphere characterized by kindness can reduce social pressures that often lead to dishonest behavior.

In addition to reducing the tendency to lie, kindness circles also strengthen solidarity and trust among students. Teachers reported that, after several meetings, students began to provide support to one another when a colleague expressed difficulties in learning or faced personal problems. Simple phrases like "thank you for being honest" or "you are amazing for telling" serve as a powerful incentive for other students to emulate the attitude. The pattern that emerges is that the more often this activity is carried out, the closer the social relationships formed in the classroom. Thus, students no longer feel the need to create stories that are not true to be accepted because they have realized that honesty holds a higher status within their friendship group. This suggests that positive interactions among peers can serve

as a social mechanism that reduces mythomaniac behavior.



Figure 2. Circle of Kindness Activity Class XI

The success of peer support through kindness circles can be understood in terms of adolescents' basic need for social acceptance. Many of the lies that students commit arise not from bad intentions but rather from pressure to impress or meet the group's standards. The conditions of a good social environment will encourage students to realize that honesty is more important and more valued than lies. Peer support is a "social mirror" that can encourage students to be honest. This differs from the external and formal reward-and-punishment approach. The Kindness Circle transforms this dynamic into a process of internalizing the value of honesty within the context of equal relationships between students. Therefore, this approach has proven effective as a form of social-emotional intervention that reduces mythomania while strengthening solidarity and trust among adolescents.

Reflective Practices with Gratitude and Kindness Journals

Reflective practice through writing gratitude journals and kindness journals is an important strategy for instilling awareness of the value of honesty, as seen at Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School. Each week, students are asked to record experiences that make them feel grateful and acts of kindness they have done or received. In addition, the teacher provides guidance in a reflection session through simple questions, such as, "What kind of work did you do this week?" or "When did you choose to be honest even though it was difficult?" Through these activities, students are taught to connect their daily experiences with positive moral values. The teacher emphasized that the process of writing and reflecting on their actions helps students understand that honesty and kindness have a deeper meaning compared to lies. Hence, the habit of creating fictional stories slowly declines. The student with the initials DF stated:

"At first, I felt strange being told to write down small and seemingly unimportant things that made me grateful for the good I did. However, over time, I became accustomed to it and had fun, and it turned out that it made me realize many good things that I had previously taken for granted. For example, when a friend wants to share a meal or the teacher gives a small compliment, I write it down, and it feels more appreciated." (DF, August 25, 2025)

The student with the initials AN also added:

"The influence of writing a journal of gratitude and a journal of kindness is quite large. I used to like to cover up mistakes for fabricated reasons. Now I am more daring to say what it is. It feels lighter, to be honest, even though it is nervous at first." (AN, August 25, 2025)

From the results of interviews with students, it can be concluded that reflective practices carried out through journals have increased their awareness of personal behavior. In the early stages, students write down their experiences briefly, but after a few times, they begin to reveal their experiences in the journal honestly and sincerely. This happens when students express gratitude for their success by admitting their mistakes in front of the teacher. This happens because students begin to get used to expressing their daily experiences reflectively, so they not only share positive things, but also discuss the mistakes they made. Thus, this demonstrates that the Gratitude Journal and the Journal of Kindness are practical introspection tools for educating students' morals based on the values of honesty and kindness.

The use of Gratitude and Kindness Journals can not only increase individual awareness to avoid lies, but can also create more supportive and reflective classroom conditions. Teachers often ask some students to read the contents of the journal that are written, especially in the heartfelt and challenging parts. Activities like this can foster mutual respect and sympathy among students for their honesty in conveying real experiences. This demonstrates that reflective writing exercises can encourage students to feel comfortable in conveying their thoughts honestly. The more often this activity is carried out, the stronger the classroom climate will be in instilling the values of kindness, honesty, and appreciation for students' real-life experiences.

The reflective use of gratitude and kindness journals has helped build students' self-awareness and self-regulation. Students who write about their positive experiences and dare to share those experiences honestly will learn to accept and assess themselves objectively. This will help them reduce the desire to gain external recognition through dishonest means, as they have achieved inner satisfaction through honest confessions poured out in the form of a journal. Thus, reflective practice through gratitude and kindness journals has had a more profound psychological impact on students than punishment methods.

Discussion

The results of this study reinterpret the phenomenon of mythomania among adolescents as a behavior that arises not only from the intention to deceive, but also from unmet psychological and social needs.¹⁷ By implementing Kindness-Based Pedagogy, educators can create a safe emotional environment, allowing students to feel secure and reducing the need for them to lie for attention.¹⁸ The discovery that empathy-based listening and compassionate correction can reduce the tendency to lie suggests that honest behavior

¹⁷ Jinjin Zhang et al., "The Moral Psychological Justification of Anger: An Exploration of Self-Respect and Recognition," *Behavioral Sciences* 15, no. 1 (2024): 3.

¹⁸ Chao Liu et al., "The Effect of Loving-Kindness Meditation on Employees' Mindfulness, Affect, Altruism and Knowledge Hiding," *BMC Psychology* 10Liu, C., no. 1 (2022): 138, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-022-00846-0>.

cannot be forced through sanctions, but rather is shaped through empathic experiences that touch on the affective aspects of students. Therefore, the results of this study indicate that honesty is an emotional skill that develops from the experience of being treated well, rather than merely adhering to norms. It also emphasizes that the kindness approach is a transformative alternative for schools in building the character of adolescents.

The significant implications of the study's results indicate that the reward-punishment method, which has become dominant in educational institutions, is only effective at the level of formal order.¹⁹ However, this approach actually shows shortcomings in the emotional aspect of students. Although strict punishment or external rewards can maintain discipline, this approach does not solve the mythomania problem that often arises from the need for attention and acceptance. In contrast, strategies that focus on empathy and compassion show a more profound impact because they can increase a sense of security for students. Therefore, kindness-based pedagogy emerged as a solution to the weaknesses of traditional methods, particularly in rural schools that value social and religious relationships. These results confirm the importance of adopting a new paradigm in pedagogical practice that emphasizes a balanced approach to emotional intervention, striking a balance between academic success and the fulfillment of students' psychological needs.

Findings related to kindness modeling and peer support through kindness circles shed light on the reasons behind the significant changes in student behavior. Adolescents fundamentally learn not only through formal learning, but also through social observation and recognition.²⁰ When teachers consistently demonstrate honesty and peer groups foster an open attitude, the social structure in schools changes. Honesty has become a valued norm, while lying has lost its role as a means of adaptation.²¹ In contrast, in highly competitive social environments, students often perpetuate lies as a means to gain recognition.²² This suggests that individual intentions do not solely influence changes in student behavior, but are also influenced by the social structures formed through kindness strategies, indicating that schools play a crucial role in creating positive norms.

Additionally, reflective practices such as gratitude journals and kindness journals have a significant influence on students' ability to self-regulate.²³ These journals serve as a tool for internalizing values, where students slowly develop a more solid moral identity. The implication is that honest behavior is no longer simply considered obedience to school rules,

¹⁹ Elok Sekar Sari, Elok Damayanti, and Putri Rosalina Rahmawati, "The Effect of Reward, Punishment and Motivation Work on The Performance of Employees CV. Rizki Agung Surabaya," *IJIEEB International Journal of Integrated Education, Engineering and Business* 5, no. 02 (2022): 88–98.

²⁰ Thomas Howard Morris and Matthias Rohs, "The Potential for Digital Technology to Support Self-Directed Learning in Formal Education of Children: A Scoping Review," *Interactive Learning Environments* 31, no. 4 (2023): 1974–1987, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1870501>.

²¹ Jonathan Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge: A Defense of Truth* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.5040/9780815750376>.

²² Cheng Ma and Bo-Ching Chen, "Influence of Competitive Attitude and Self-Efficacy on Task Motivation in Vocational High School Students: The Moderating Role of Competitive Environment in the Context of 'Lying Flat' Culture," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (2024): 1427041, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1427041>.

²³ Afsaneh Ghanizadeh, Sima Kamel, and Behzad Ghonsooly, "The Impact of Reflective Journal Writing (RJW) on Learners' Mindfulness, Mastery Goal, and Language Learning," *Journal of Studies in Language Learning and Teaching* 2, no. 1 (2025): 1–14.

but develops into a deeper part of personal awareness.²⁴ This happens because reflective writing can create a new cognitive and emotional structure for students to associate real experiences with the value of honesty.²⁵ With this space for reflection, students realize that lying is no longer necessary to gain self-validation, because the recognition that comes from practicing reflection feels more satisfying. In this way, journaling activities not only serve as personal notes but also as an educational tool that changes the way students think about the value of honesty.²⁶

In addition, the implementation of a combination of kindness circles and reflective practices has been shown to have a significant impact on student behavior, aiming to reduce mythomania. Through kindness circles, students get a safe space to share experiences, listen to friends' stories, and learn to value candor as a shared value that is upheld.²⁷ The dynamics in this group create an atmosphere of acceptance, which allows students to feel accepted while being honest. This process is strengthened by the implementation of gratitude and kindness journal writing activities, which provide students with regular opportunities to reflect on themselves. Thus, the students will realize that honesty is their moral obligation and a positive aspect of their identity. A combination of social support from peers and self-reinforcement through personal reflection can help students achieve psychological well-being, making them less likely to lie to gain recognition and appreciation from their environment.²⁸

The discussion of the results of this study suggests that kindness-based pedagogy can alleviate and address the psychological, emotional, and social issues faced by students within the school environment. The primary objective of this strategy is to foster a more humane educational environment where honesty is valued and deception is no longer necessary for adaptation. When the relationship between teacher and student, peer norms, and students' moral identity are formed through an approach that emphasizes kindness, the need to lie disappears.²⁹ Instead, honesty gains social, cognitive, and spiritual recognition in a school context. Thus, the results of this study highlight the importance of implications for educational practice: schools should strike a balance between academic aspects and emotional interventions that promote kindness. Only with this method can education

²⁴ Ahmad Salim et al., "Madrasah as Habitus for Increasing Tolerance in Multi-Religious Society," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan dan Kemasyarakatan* 21, no. 2 (2023): 148–162, <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v21i2.6341>.

²⁵ Patricia Kimball and Denise Daniel, "Reflective Writing: Enhancing Students Cognitive Complexity through Ethics Education," *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 15, no. 2 (2020): 250–264, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/15401383.2019.1682737>.

²⁶ Jo Anne Genua, "The Relationship between the Grading of Reflective Journals and Student Honesty in Reflective Journal Writing," *Nursing Education Perspectives* 42, no. 4 (2021): 227–231, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1097/01.NEP.0000000000000826>.

²⁷ Christina Parker and Kathy Bickmore, "Classroom Peace Circles: Teachers' Professional Learning and Implementation of Restorative Dialogue," *Teaching and Teacher Education* 95 (2020): 103129, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103129>.

²⁸ Kristian Øen, Rune J Krumsvik, and Øystein O Skaar, "Development of Inclusive Practice—the Art of Balancing Emotional Support and Constructive Feedback," in *Frontiers in Education*, vol. 9 (2024): 1281334, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1281334>.

²⁹ Tobias Krettenauer and Matt Stichter, "Moral Identity and the Acquisition of Virtue: A Self-Regulation View," *Review of General Psychology* 27, no. 4 (2023): 396–409, <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680231170393>.

produce students who not only obey the rules but also form individuals with moral integrity and an awareness of honesty in their daily lives.

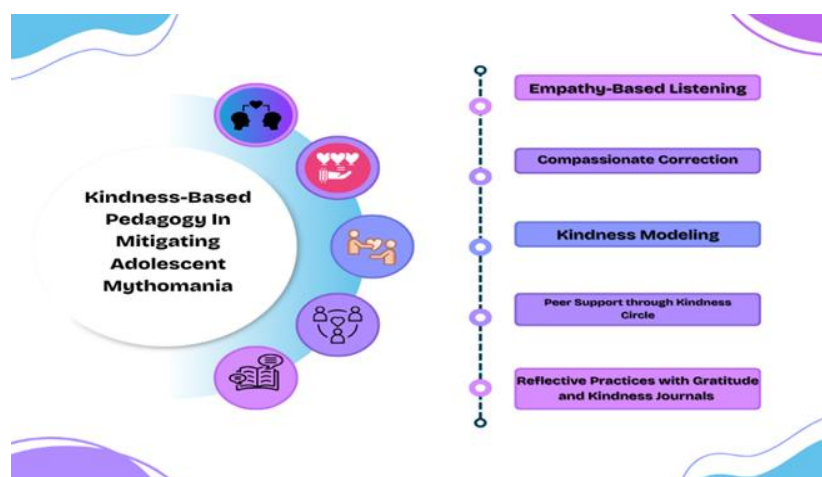


Figure 3. Kindness-Based Pedagogy in Mitigating Adolescent Mythomania

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that adolescent mythomania cannot be effectively addressed solely through reward and punishment systems. Instead, an empathetic, humanistic approach, such as kindness-based pedagogy, is more successful. At Miftahul Ulum Islamic High School, this approach has created a safe environment where students can express themselves openly and honestly. The key finding is that honesty can become part of a student's moral identity when they are listened to, corrected with compassion, supported by peers, and encouraged to reflect on their actions through journaling. This study highlights the importance of education in developing not only orderly behavior but also emotional and spiritual awareness. It affirms that kindness is not only an ethical value but also an effective pedagogical tool for fostering honest character in students.

The study contributes to the pedagogical literature by emphasizing the role of kindness-based pedagogy in character education, particularly in addressing mythomania among adolescents. It provides empirical evidence that strategies centered on empathy, role modeling, and self-reflection are more effective in the long term than traditional methods focused on punishment and rewards. From a theoretical standpoint, it adds a new dimension to the study of compassionate pedagogy and social-emotional learning by exploring mythomania, a seldom-discussed issue. While the study's limitations include its focus on a single rural school and the absence of quantitative data, it opens avenues for future research that could involve more diverse schools, integrate quantitative methods, and explore additional factors such as gender, age, and family influence.

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