

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ASSERTIVE TRAINING IN IMPROVING ASSERTIVE BEHAVIOUR IN PEER COUNSELORS

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ABSTRACT

The inability to express feelings, difficulty and confusion in making decisions, fear of making mistakes, and dependence on the approval of others are common challenges faced by peer counselors. This research aims to enhance the ability of peer counselors to behave assertively through assertiveness training. The research method used is pre-experimental with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The study involved 14 peer counselors as research subjects. The instrument used is the Assertive Behavior Inventory, which consists of 33 statement items. The research findings indicate that assertiveness training interventions can improve assertive behavior. This is evidenced by the results of the paired sample t-test, which show that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected. This suggests a significant difference in assertive behavior between the pre-test and post-test results, confirming the effectiveness of assertiveness training in enhancing assertive behavior among peer counselors. This study highlights the importance of strengthening peer counselor competencies, particularly assertive behavior skills, which play a crucial role in the success of the peer counseling service process.

Keywords: assertiveness, behavior, peer counselor

INTRODUCTION

However, in the reality of life around us, the inability to behave assertively is still commonly encountered, both in personal realms and in interpersonal relationships. Several studies, as far as the researchers know, show that the inability to behave assertively has negative impacts, such as individuals experiencing dissatisfaction because they cannot express their desires firmly, having difficulty setting boundaries with others to communicate their personal needs, feeling guilty, struggling to make decisions

due to fear of making mistakes, and relying heavily on the approval of others. Consequently, individuals may feel unappreciated because they are unable to defend their rights (Laila, 2024). In interpersonal relationships, the inability to behave assertively can lead to conflicts due to an imbalance of power, as one person tends to dominate decision-making. This can result in excessive compromise and a lack of ability to resolve conflicts, ultimately diminishing the quality of relationships between individuals (Aryani, 2022). Additionally, the inability to

communicate negative feelings and behaviors caused by others can lead individuals to suppress and hide their emotions, which may result in stress and frustration (Laila, 2024; Nurendah et al., 2023).

Given the negative impacts caused by the inability to act assertively, as described in the previous paragraph, assertive behavior is crucial for every individual, especially for peer counselors. Peer counselors provide assistance both individually and in groups to their peers who face problems or experience various obstacles in personality development (Erhamwilda, 2015). Peer counselors are non-professional individuals who offer support to their peers (Yunita, 2023).

Peer counselors represent an effective strategy to improve adolescent emotional literacy, highlighting the significant role they play in providing education and problem-solving (Karsih et al., 2020). It is also recognized that a continuous coaching program to enhance the skills of peer counselors is necessary to ensure that the prepared program can be implemented effectively (Triyanto et al., 2021). Other research indicates that the limited skills of peer counselors in addressing student problems are a barrier to the effectiveness of peer counseling (Astiti, 2019).

Assertive communication is essential for counselors, enabling them to recognize the realities they face and helping them navigate their difficulties. Counselors also benefit from assertive communication during the counseling process (Rukmana, 2017). Assertive behavior is urgently needed to achieve comprehensive success in providing guidance and counseling services (Lianawati et al., 2021). The basic skills required for peer counseling, such as attending skills, active listening, summarizing, questioning, empathy, acceptance, contracting, reflection, clarification, appreciating differences, and confrontation (Liqoiyah et al., 2022), necessitate the implementation of assertive behavior. In active listening, peer counselors must not only listen but also provide honest, congruent, and sincere feedback. These characteristics are fundamental to

establishing relationships with clients (Setiawan & Yaniasti, 2023), and can only be effectively demonstrated if the peer counselor is able to behave assertively.

In questioning, summarizing, reflection, clarification, and confrontation, assertive communication skills are also essential to ensure that counselors and clients maintain honest relationships and communication, allowing clients to express their problems, feelings, and thoughts without dominance from the counselor. The effectiveness of the counseling process is enhanced when a strong relationship exists between the counselor and the client, which is developed through both verbal and non-verbal communication (Aminah, 2018). Furthermore, according to Tindall and Gray, peer counseling training must include eight basic communication skills: attending, empathizing, summarizing, questioning, genuineness, assertiveness, confrontation, and problem-solving (Liqoiyah et al., 2022).

Assertive training, also known as assertiveness training, is a technique used to help individuals develop the courage to express desired behaviors, ultimately fostering assertiveness. This training involves practicing direct interaction in interpersonal relationships. The key focus of assertive training is to practice through role-playing and to develop newly acquired social skills, enabling individuals to overcome their difficulties and learn to express their feelings and thoughts more openly (Azmi & Nurjannah, 2022). Assertive training is based on social skills training procedures, also referred to as the Structured Learning Approach (SLA) (Cardenas, 2020). This training procedure is grounded in learning theory and behavior modification. The procedures may include: (1) modeling, (2) role-playing, (3) feedback, and (4) transfer of training and maintenance. Lawrence (in Samfira, 2020) added that assertive training is a systematic process that encompasses skills, concepts, and attitudes, enabling individuals to confidently convey their thoughts, feelings, desires, and needs directly, honestly, and openly without offending others. In assertive training,

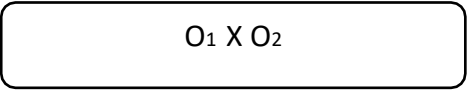
individuals are guided to express themselves in a way that acknowledges the rights of others while affirming their own desires without disregarding the feelings of others (Aryani, 2022).

Initial interviews with peer counselors revealed that they often exhibit aggressive or passive behaviors, struggle to express their opinions, and find it difficult to resist and set boundaries. They tend to avoid conflict, hesitate, and feel uncomfortable speaking honestly for fear of hurting the feelings of others. The issues expressed are related to their inability to behave assertively, indicating that peer counselors need assertive training to express their feelings, thoughts, and opinions more openly. Assertive training is believed to assist individuals who have difficulty expressing both negative and positive feelings, exhibit excessive politeness, consistently prioritize the interests of others over their own, struggle to say "no" and feel they do not have the right to their own thoughts and feelings (Corey, 2022).

The novelty and gap between this research and previous studies related to assertive behavior lie in the selection of subjects receiving treatment. Previous studies have primarily provided assertiveness training to teenagers, students, and teachers. However, there has been no research focused on providing assertiveness training to peer counselors. This study highlights the need for peer counselors to develop assertive behavior as a competency that can enhance their ability to provide effective peer counseling services.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a pre-experimental type of research, utilizing a one-group pretest-posttest design. The dependent variable of this study is assertive behavior, while the independent variable is assertiveness training. The respondents in this study consisted of 14 peer counselors who are members of the UIN Mataram Student Information and Counseling Center. The design of the implementation of this research is outlined below.



O₁ X O₂

Figure 1.
Pretest-posttest Design
Assertiveness Training

The research was conducted by measuring assertive behavior abilities in both the pretest and posttest using an inventory of assertive behavior developed based on the assertive behavior aspects outlined in the theory by Alberti & Emmons (2017), as referenced by (Fauziah et al., 2024). This inventory includes aspects such as the ability to act according to one's own capabilities, the ability to express feelings, the ability to defend oneself, the ability to express opinions, and the ability to respect the rights of others. The instruments used have been tested for reliability and validity. The data analysis employed in this study is a t-test (Paired Sample t-Test). The paired sample t-test is a type of comparative hypothesis test that utilizes parametric statistical analysis. It is used on two paired samples, meaning that the samples are drawn from the same subjects. The decision-making basis for the paired sample t-test relies on the comparison of significance values (probabilities) as follows: if the value of Sig. (2-tailed) is less than 0.05, then the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted, and the null hypothesis (H_o) is rejected.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the data processing results of the assertive behavior instruments for peer counselors, the total score of each subject was categorized into three categories: low, medium, and high. The total scores of 14 subjects indicated that the pretest results did not fall into the low category; instead, 9 subjects were in the medium category, and 5 subjects were in the high category. Following this, an intervention or treatment was conducted using assertiveness training to improve the assertive behavior abilities of the peer counselors. After the treatment was completed, the peer counselors were given a posttest to determine if there was a change in their scores before and after the intervention.

Below is a table showing the changes in the subjects' pretest and posttest results.

Table 1.
Pretest Posttest Score Category

Initial	Pretest	Category	Posttest	Category
NAH	64	Middle	97	High
SA	85	High	105	High
YA	64	Middle	95	High
AA	63	Middle	94	High
AMA	66	Middle	99	High
MU	68	High	99	High
AR	65	Middle	98	High
SAA	85	High	110	High
APR	50	Middle	82	High
JRU	65	Middle	95	High
IN	80	High	103	High
NOZ	90	High	117	High
SZ	61	Middle	91	High
ADC	60	Middle	90	High

Based on the table above, it can be observed that there was a change in the scores after the intervention compared to before the intervention. In the pretest, there were nine peer counselors in the medium category and four peer counselors in the high category. In the posttest, all peer counselors experienced an increase in scores, with all now in the high category. The initial pretest results, which showed a medium category, indicate the need for assertiveness training for peer counselors, as those in the medium category are vulnerable to difficulties in assertive behavior, particularly in expressing feelings, defending themselves, and expressing opinions. This highlights the necessity for peer counselors to strengthen their assertive abilities. The differences and changes in the scores presented in Table 1 demonstrate an influence that has led to improvements in assertive behavior, as evidenced by the significant increase in scores.

The results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, based on the table above, show a significance value of Asymp. Sig (2-tailed) of 0.200, which is greater than 0.05, indicating that the data are normally distributed. The normality test is a prerequisite for conducting nonparametric statistics before proceeding to the t-test. Since the results of the normality test indicate normally distributed data, the analysis of the t-test can be carried out.

Table 2.
Normality Test Results

One-SampleKolmogorov-SmirnovTest		
N		Unstandardized Residual
Normal	Mean	14
Parameters ^{a,b}		.0000000
	Std. Deviation	2.59512918
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.169
	Positive	.097
	Negative	-.169
TestStatistic		.169
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.200 ^{c,d}

Table 3 below shows the differences between the pretest and posttest scores. The table indicates that the pretest score (68.86) is less than the posttest score (98.21), which signifies a significant average increase between the two scores. This indicates a significant change between the scores before and after the intervention.

Table 3.
Difference Between Pretest and Posttest Results

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest	68.86	14	11.488	3.070
Posttest	98.21	14	8.702	2.326

Furthermore, Table 4 presents the correlation between the pretest and posttest scores, showing a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This means that there is a relationship or correlation between the pretest and posttest values, with a correlation coefficient of 0.954 and a significance level of 0.000.

Table 4.
Correlation Pretest and Posttest

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pretest & Posttest	68.86	14	11.488

The results of the t-test conducted show a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.005 ($0.000 < 0.005$). This indicates that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected, as shown in Table 5 above. Here, H_0 states that assertive training is not effective in improving assertive behavior, while H_a states that assertive training is effective in improving assertive behavior. Therefore, in this study,

H_a is accepted, confirming that assertive training is effective in enhancing assertive behavior.

Table 5 further illustrates that the results of the t-test show a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05 ($0.000 < 0.05$). This reinforces that H_a is accepted and H_0 is rejected. Thus, it can be concluded that assertive training is effective in improving assertive behavior.

Table 5.
Correlation Pretest and Posttest

Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper		
29.357	4.106	1.097	-31.728	-26.986	1326	.000
					749	

The results of the study indicate that assertive training techniques are effective in improving assertive behavior, as evidenced by the analysis of differences in assertive behavior scores before and after the intervention, along with the significance value obtained from the t-test. In Table 1, the change in the pretest and posttest scores demonstrates an increase in categorization. The pretest revealed that 9 peer counselors were in the medium category and 4 were in the high category. Although peer counselors exhibited an average level of assertive behavior in the pretest, they still faced challenges in expressing feelings, defending themselves, and articulating their opinions.

This concern was addressed during the assertive training interventions, where peer counselors were encouraged to express themselves by completing worksheets on non-assertive behaviors they had exhibited, participating in role-playing exercises, and providing feedback after these activities. The feedback emphasized that expressing opinions and feelings is not wrong for peer counselors to do.

The reinforcement of the ability to express feelings, defend oneself, and articulate opinions has resulted in changes, as shown

by the posttest results, which indicate an increase in scores, placing all peer counselors in the high category. These findings align with the study by Gallasi & Gallasi (Speed et al., 2018), which demonstrates the effectiveness of assertive skills training procedures. Their study states that assertiveness training programs encompass crucial aspects for improving assertive behavior, including modeling, behavior repetition, and feedback. Additionally, the results of this study are consistent with subsequent research that highlights the development of assertive communication skills among participants in assertive training (Argestya et al., 2022).

Social skills training (including assertive behavior) consist of several keys methods: instruction, modeling, role-playing, warm-up exercises, reinforcement, and homework (Cardenas, 2020). Other experts argue that developing assertive skills can be achieved by practicing the ability to distinguish between assertive, passive, and aggressive behaviors (Aryani, 2022). In this study, several techniques were employed in assertive training, including distinguishing assertive, passive, and aggressive behaviors, self-disclosure, role-playing, and providing feedback.

In the first session, assertive training was conducted to help peer counselors understand the differences between assertive, passive, and aggressive communication. The peer counselors then filled out a worksheet to reflect on negative self-disclosure resulting from their inability to behave assertively. Assertive training focuses on addressing the counselors' negative self-disclosure, self-destructive beliefs, and erroneous thinking (Aryani, 2022). The negative self-disclosure of counselors can be observed in the worksheets detailing non-assertive behaviors expressed by each peer counselor.

The role-playing method involved choosing role cards that had been provided. Peer counselors acted out roles according to the cards they received. In role-playing, individuals engage in scenarios based on the role-playing cards, which aim to contribute to self-understanding, improve skills, analyze

behavior, or demonstrate appropriate actions to others (Arifin, 2020).

Feedback on performance was given after the peer counselors completed their role-playing. In this session, peer counselors received information on how well they performed their roles. Feedback included encouragement, suggestions, approval, guidance, and constructive criticism to enhance and reinforce their learning outcomes. During the feedback session, peer counselors were also encouraged to express their feelings and thoughts regarding their roles and the actions they chose to take. This practice aimed to strengthen their ability to express themselves and be honest about their feelings and thoughts.

The findings are consistent with the studies by Argestya et al. (2022) and Nurendah et al. (2023), which indicated a change in communication skills among junior high school students after receiving assertive communication training. Assertive behavior skills empower individuals to refuse requests, express uncomfortable feelings, articulate their needs for help, convey both positive and negative emotions, defend their rights while respecting the rights of others, and enhance their self-esteem (Anghel & Jitaru, 2019).

The findings of this study highlight the importance of assertive behavior skills for peer counselors. The limited assertive skills of peer counselors can hinder the effectiveness of peer counseling, but these limitations can be minimized by strengthening their skills through assertive training.

Assertive training can be implemented through information services, classical guidance, and group guidance. Peer counselors who demonstrate assertive behavior skills can provide more effective services by expressing their thoughts, ideas, and feelings, which enables them to offer better alternative solutions to problems.

Assertive training can also be beneficial in the context of social and personal counseling services for individuals who struggle to express their feelings honestly, lack confidence in social interactions, or find it difficult to refuse friends' invitations that may

lead to negative outcomes. Developing assertive behavior skills can help individuals build healthy social and communication relationships.

CONCLUSION

This study provides evidence that assertive training can increase assertive behavior in peer counselors. The more frequently assertive training is conducted, the better the assertive behavior exhibited by peer counselors. The findings of this study serve as a reference and enhance the knowledge of Guidance and Counseling teachers, enabling them to improve the basic skills of peer counseling counselors, particularly in developing assertive behavior skills that can facilitate the counseling process in schools through assertive training. Training peer counselors in assertive behavior plays a crucial role in enhancing their knowledge and developing their counseling skills, ultimately allowing them to provide effective assistance.

Additionally, assertive training is beneficial for students who struggle to express their thoughts, feelings, and ideas, lack confidence, and have difficulty making decisions due to their reliance on the approval of others. It is also valuable for students who face challenges in building social relationships.

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