

The Impact of Assertive Training Techniques on Enhancing Self-Disclosure Among Junior High School Students in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

Self-disclosure is a vital component of effective interpersonal communication, especially among students. This study investigates the impact of assertiveness training on enhancing students' self-disclosure. An experimental design with a non-equivalent control group was utilized. Twelve students were divided into two groups: an experimental group receiving assertiveness training and a control group engaged in discussion techniques. Both groups underwent pretests and posttests. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test to determine changes in self-disclosure levels. Pretest results showed no significant difference in self-disclosure between the two groups (sig. = 0.066). Posttest results indicated a significant increase in self-disclosure within the experimental group following assertiveness training (sig. = 0.027). The control group showed no significant changes in self-disclosure after the intervention. The findings suggest that assertiveness training is effective in improving students' self-disclosure, whereas discussion techniques alone do not yield similar outcomes. Assertiveness training significantly enhances students' self-disclosure. This suggests its potential utility in educational settings to foster better interpersonal communication among students.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As social beings, humans need interaction and relationships with others. Self-disclosure, is the key to the process of social interaction and relationships with others. Relationships will grow if there is good interpersonal communication, where self-disclosure is a basic element in such communication. Providing information about oneself to others so that they know what one thinks, feels, and wants is called self-disclosure (Solehah et al., 2024). Everyone should be able to have a positive attitude of openness, especially during the learning process, such as having the courage to speak up in front of the class, having the courage to express opinions, and being able to interact with the environment. Students'

openness will not just happen if no one helps them understand the importance of being open. In this situation, students need to have high self-disclosure skills in order to be able to process and analyse various information that they have received, as Wheelles defined self-disclosure as the capacity to reveal personal information to others (Munthe, 2022).

Self-disclosure refers to a person's capacity to divulge personal information to others. Two factors underlie the consequences of self-disclosure: first, letting go of negative emotions can feel relieving. A person can develop the possibility for friendship, growth, commitment, trust, empathy, and self-acceptance by being open about themselves (Khalid & Wahyuni, 2023). The results of previous research from (Ginting et al., 2023) regarding self-disclosure showed that the results of 288 students demonstrated that the self-disclosure patterns of men and women differ. Men and women have distinct expectations, which leads to disparities in how they disclose themselves. Openness to women can be increased by expectations that women can help and delight others, while openness to men might be hindered by expectations that men appear stronger, more objective, hard-working, and emotionless.

The act of self-disclosure usually involves revealing private details about oneself to others in an effort to foster empathy, curiosity, or connection in interpersonal communication (Lindecker & Cramer, 2021). An essential component of intimacy is self-disclosure, which is impossible to attain without it. It is assumed that self-disclosure will be reciprocal and acceptable. Analysis of costs and rewards, which are further explained by social exchange theory, can be used to evaluate self-disclosure. The student's ability to disclose himself will help them succeed academically and adjust to their own self-situation. Students who lack the ability to disclose themselves will find it challenging to interact with others. The symptoms include his inability to voice opinions, his inability to articulate ideas or thoughts that are inside of him, and his feelings of fear or anxiety when he tries to voice them (Nawas et al., 2022). Intimate self-disclosure happens later in a relationship, although most self-disclosure happens early. Overcoming self-closing behavior students can be overcome through assertive training techniques for students (Thakur & Vivek, 2021).

For pupils to have healthy connections with instructors, peers, neighbours, seniors, friends, and coworkers, among others, assertiveness is essential. They must be assertive to overcome the obstacles because they require help from others in various contexts. They risk losing their sense of self if they are unable to communicate their ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Furthermore, poor communication and a lack of openness can harm their relationships and cause tension, anxiety, and melancholy (Kumar & Parray, 2022). The goal of assertiveness or assertiveness training is to help people become more assertive in their thoughts and actions. This can help them transform their self-perception, build confidence, and overcome social anxiety. In essence, assertiveness training aims to boost a person's self-esteem and resilience by increasing their level of self-confidence (Ekwelundu, 2022).

People who are assertive assert their rights, ask for what they want from others, say no to things they don't want, take praise, and express their emotions with ease. All of these improve and ease their life and enable them to receive favourable reactions from others. As a result, their stress and anxiety levels may drop, and their confidence in social interactions may rise (Kumar & Parray, 2022). Assertiveness is a relational style and interpersonal skill that allows people to communicate their needs in a straightforward, non-aggressive manner while setting boundaries. A person demonstrates assertive behaviour when they communicate their thoughts, feelings, and rights in a way that does not minimise but rather comprehends and respects those of others in order to preserve positive relationships, settle disputes with others, and keep their own needs from being suppressed or stifled (Morsi & Prince, 2021).

The assertive training technique is an assistance provided to overcome problems related to difficulties in expressing feelings, emotions, and also difficulties in showing assertiveness appropriately. Assertive training aims to strengthen the individual's courage in showing the expected behavior, with the aim of training self-confidence. This activity is designed to assist individuals in improving how to interact well directly in an interpersonal context. In addition, assertive training enhances the ability to assertively and honestly express individual beliefs, thoughts, and feelings, and

defend personal rights by maintaining the feelings and rights of others (Sulmayanti et al., 2024). In human interactions, assertiveness encourages equality, allows people to act in their own best interests, motivates them to defend their own rights without violating those of others, and allows them to express their true feelings (ElBarazi et al., 2024).

Assertiveness training, as observed by several researchers, has proven effective in transforming aggressive behaviors, improving social skills, and enhancing emotional well-being among adolescents—whether they are perpetrators or victims of bullying (Ekwelundu, 2022). Assertiveness is considered a learned behavior rather than an inherent trait, which makes it accessible to most individuals with appropriate guidance. Recognizing this, assertiveness training focuses not only on understanding the importance of assertive behavior but also on practicing and applying it in real-life contexts with the support of professionals. Its primary objective is to minimize passive or aggressive responses and increase the range of situations in which assertive behavior can be expressed (Awate & Rukumani, 2021).

Self-disclosure, a critical component of interpersonal intimacy, plays a significant role in relationship development. According to social exchange theory, individuals engage in self-disclosure through a cost-benefit analysis. While initial stages of relationships often involve basic self-disclosure, deeper and more personal sharing tends to occur later as trust builds (Khalid & Wahyuni, 2023). Assertiveness and self-disclosure are interconnected; being assertive involves standing up for one's rights without infringing upon the rights of others, which fosters healthier communication and stronger personal boundaries (Boham et al., 2021).

This study seeks to examine the effect of assertiveness training on students' self-disclosure and explore whether publication bias exists in previous meta-analyses. The findings aim to provide practical insights for researchers and practitioners, serving as a valuable reference for future studies and the development of communication-based interventions.

2. METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach using a quasi-experimental design, specifically a non-equivalent control group pretest-posttest model. Both the experimental and control groups were assessed prior to and following the intervention. The experimental group participated in assertiveness training, while the control group continued with standard school-based activities, primarily consisting of conversational learning exercises. As group assignments were not randomized, the study adhered to the characteristics of quasi-experimental research, as described by Heppner et al. (2016).

The experimental design was selected to investigate the causal relationship between assertiveness training and changes in students' self-disclosure behaviors. By utilizing this design, the study aimed to reduce the influence of external variables, control for potential selection bias, and determine whether the intervention directly affected the observed outcomes.

The primary objective was to enhance self-disclosure among students at SMP Negeri Yogyakarta by implementing assertiveness training for the experimental group. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, based on low scores obtained from a validated self-disclosure scale during the pretest phase. The sample comprised twelve first-year junior high school students (aged 12–15) who demonstrated limited openness. These participants were then randomly assigned to either the experimental group ($n = 6$) or the control group ($n = 6$).

The intervention involved five assertiveness training sessions, each lasting 60 minutes. The sessions incorporated role-playing activities grounded in real-life situations shared by the students, aimed at fostering assertive yet respectful communication skills. In contrast, the control group received no additional training and continued with routine school activities, including discussion-based lessons.

Prior to the intervention, both groups exhibited similarly low levels of self-disclosure, as evidenced by pretest results and behavioral indicators such as hesitancy to speak in class, difficulty expressing emotions or needs, low self-confidence, avoidance of disclosure-related situations, excessive reliance on social media, and passive communication tendencies.

To evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was employed. Given the small sample size ($n < 30$), a non-parametric statistical method was deemed appropriate for testing the research hypothesis.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

Before the research was conducted, the researchers first conducted a pretest and gave a self-disclosure scale to students in the twelve-student experimental and control groups. The purpose of the pretest was to ascertain the degree of self-disclosure among students in the high, medium or low category. The pretest results in the groups that are being experimented on and control as follows:

Table 1. Experimental and Control Group Pretest Results

No	Student Name	Pretest	Information	Student Name	Pretest	Information
1.	EJMD	42	Low	NSF	40	Low
2.	SA	41	Low	MNS	41	Low
3.	SMA	42	Low	RAA	39	Low
4.	KPZ	38	Low	NAS	38	Low
5.	AS	39	Low	QL	37	Low
6.	FA	40	Low	CAA	39	Low
Sum		242			234	
Average Score		40	Low		39	Low

Based on the pretest results, all seven participating students demonstrated a low level of self-disclosure prior to the intervention. The experimental group had an average self-disclosure score of 40%, while the control group averaged 39%. These findings confirm that both groups started from a similarly low baseline in terms of self-openness.

As shown in the table above, the average pretest score for the experimental group was 40, which falls into the low self-openness category. Similarly, the control group's average score was 39, also categorized as low. Table 2 below presents the results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test used to analyze the significance of these scores before and after the intervention.

Table 2. Results of Wilcoxon Test Pretest of Experimental Group and Control Group

Test Statistics^a	
Pre Control – Pre	
Experiment	
Z	-1.841 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.066

The experimental and control groups' pretest results, which had a p value of 0.066 for the Wilcoxon test, confirmed the earlier descriptive findings that there was no significant difference between the experimental group's mean pretest score of 40.33 and the control group's score of 39.00, meaning that both groups' levels of self-disclosure were low prior to treatment or intervention. The experimental and control groups' posttest results are as follows:

Table 3. Experimental and Control Group Posttest Results

No	Student Name	Pretest	Information	Student Name	Pretest	Information
1.	EJMD	84	High	NSF	41	Low
2.	SA	86	High	MNS	41	Low
3.	SMA	86	High	RAA	40	Low
4.	KPZ	85	High	NAS	38	Low
5.	AS	84	High	QL	41	Low
6.	FA	85	High	CAA	40	Low
Sum		510			241	
Average Score		85	High		40	Low

After receiving the assertive training technique, seven students in the experimental group showed a high level of self-disclosure, whereas the control group displayed poor self-disclosure, according to the posttest results on students' self-disclosure following treatment after being given the discussion technique. The posttest results in the experimental group had an average of 85% and the control group had an average of 40%. This shows that the experimental group's pretest and posttest scores significantly increased. However, there were no changes in the pretest or posttest for the control group. Table 4 below displays the Wilcoxon test findings, which are as follows:

Table 4. Results of Wilcoxon Test Posttest of Experimental Group and Control Group

<i>Test Statistics^a</i>	
	Post Control – Post Experiment
Z	-2.214 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.027

The results of the Wilcoxon signed-rank test revealed a statistically significant difference in the posttest outcomes between the experimental and control groups ($p = 0.027$). The experimental group, which received assertiveness training, demonstrated a notable improvement in self-disclosure, while the control group, which participated in discussion-based activities, showed minimal change. These findings support the hypothesis that assertiveness training is an effective method for enhancing students' self-disclosure.

3.2 Discussion

Adolescence is a critical period for social development, and self-disclosure plays a vital role in helping adolescents adapt to diverse social environments. Research has shown that individuals who are open in their communication tend to exhibit greater emotional well-being, adaptability, and interpersonal trust (Bulantika et al., 2020). Self-disclosure fosters reciprocal relationships, leading to improved self-awareness, emotional security, and the ability to resolve social challenges. However, the degree of self-disclosure often depends on the perceived safety and quality of social interactions – trust and positive engagement increase openness, while distrust can lead to withdrawal (Gainau, 2019).

Moreover, the benefits of self-disclosure are closely tied to its target and context. A supportive social environment can enhance self-confidence and facilitate emotional expression, contributing to better social adjustment (Gao & Takai, 2024). Importantly, self-disclosure does not imply revealing everything; individuals often withhold information that feels unsafe or shameful, which, if unaddressed, may lead to psychological distress (Aldahadha, 2023).

Assertiveness training equips individuals with the skills to express thoughts, feelings, and beliefs clearly and respectfully, without violating others' rights. It teaches effective emotional communication

and conflict resolution while promoting mutual respect. Assertiveness training also serves as a practical tool to facilitate self-disclosure, particularly in students who struggle with social expression. Through structured practice—such as role-playing and peer interaction—students can gradually build the confidence to communicate more openly (Suhanda et al., 2023; Utami et al., 2021).

This training technique, rooted in the behavioral approach, is designed to help students express themselves assertively and appropriately, even when dealing with difficult emotions. It strengthens their ability to defend personal boundaries while maintaining empathy and respect for others (Sulmayanti et al., 2024). Research confirms that assertiveness training enhances communication skills, builds confidence, and fosters healthier peer relationships. It is especially effective for students with low self-disclosure, helping them regain confidence and participate more actively in social and academic settings (Rahmawati et al., 2024).

These findings support the theory that assertiveness is a learnable social skill that enhances interpersonal effectiveness. Assertiveness training allows students to model, observe, and practice healthy communication, which positively impacts their emotional regulation and helps prevent passive or aggressive responses in social situations (Butt & Zahid, 2015; Henning et al., 2023). This study reinforces the idea that assertiveness and self-disclosure are interconnected and essential for developing meaningful relationships.

Enhancing self-disclosure and assertiveness can empower students to express discomfort, reduce the risk of victimization or passivity in conflict, and overcome social anxiety. As a result, students are more likely to engage in classroom discussions, participate in group activities, and build supportive relationships (Yosep et al., 2024). These outcomes suggest that assertiveness training should be considered a valuable component of school counseling programs, particularly in supporting students' interpersonal development.

Expanding the sample size in future research would increase the generalizability of these findings. A larger, more diverse participant pool would enhance statistical power and allow for the detection of more nuanced differences between groups. Future studies should also incorporate long-term follow-up assessments—at intervals such as six months or one year—to evaluate the lasting effects of assertiveness training on self-disclosure.

Long-term, assertive students may demonstrate higher academic engagement, better group collaboration, and improved peer and teacher relationships. Their ability to communicate effectively and set boundaries can also help reduce the likelihood of being bullied. These broader benefits highlight the importance of integrating assertiveness training into school-based counseling and extracurricular programs aimed at enhancing communication, emotional intelligence, and social resilience.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that assertiveness training significantly improved students' self-disclosure, as demonstrated by the experimental group's increased openness and proactive communication compared to the control group, which showed no significant change using discussion techniques. These findings suggest that assertiveness training is a more effective intervention for fostering students' self-awareness and confidence in interpersonal interactions. However, the study was limited by its small sample size, which may affect the generalizability of the results. Additionally, the short duration of the intervention may not capture the long-term effects of assertiveness training. Future research should involve a larger, more diverse sample and consider longitudinal designs to assess the sustainability of self-disclosure improvements over time. Further studies could also explore the integration of assertiveness training across different educational and cultural contexts to better understand its broader applicability and effectiveness. These insights are valuable for counseling practitioners and educators seeking to enhance students' personal, social, academic, and career development through structured communication interventions.

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