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The Effectiveness of Assertiveness Training Group Format to Improve Students' Interpersonal Relationship Skills

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Abstrak: Interpersonal relationship skills are the ability of individuals to build relationships with other people. This research is motivated by the discovery of interpersonal relationship problems among students, such as being unable to refuse invitations from friends, isolated students, muttering, aggressive, and a lack of care for others. This study aims to test the effectiveness of assertiveness group format training to improve students' interpersonal relationship skills. This study used a quasi-experimental method with the non-equivalent control group design. The subjects of this study were students of class VIII SMP who were selected by purposive sampling technique. The instrument used was a scale of interpersonal skills with a validity of 0.535 and reliability of 0.881. Data analysis used the wilcoxon signed-rank test and kolmogorov smirnov. The results showed that the use of assertiveness training group format was effective in improving students' interpersonal relationship skills.

Keywords: Interpersonal Skills, Interpersonal Relationship, Assertiveness Training Group Format

Introduction

Humans are social creatures who always need other people for their survival. Junior high school students are part of social beings and have entered the stage of adolescent development. Individuals are said to enter the stage of adolescent development when they are 12-21 years old (Ali & Asrori, 2011; Jahja, 2013; Monks & Knoers, 2013). Adolescence is a period of transition from child to adulthood. There are many changes experienced by individuals when entering adolescence, including physical, psychological, and psychosocial changes (Papalia & Feldman, 2014). Some adolescents have difficulty dealing with changes that occur in

themselves (Monks & Knoers, 2013; Papalia & Feldman, 2014). Therefore, adolescents need other people to understand every physical and psychological change they experience (Santrock, 2014). So that the need to connect with other people, especially peers, is growing and increasing in adolescence. During adolescence, relationships with parents also change. Adolescents spend more time with peers than their parents (Kenny, Dooley, & Fitzgerald, 2013; Monks & Knoers, 2013; Santrock, 2014) and there are frequent conflicts between parents and adolescents (De Goede, Branje, & Meeus., 2009).

This is by one of the tasks of adolescent development, namely accepting social roles, learning independently, and fostering interpersonal relationships with peers, both boys, and girls (Monks & Knoers, 2013). Teens have a need to be liked and accepted by their peers. This acceptance creates feelings of joy and happiness, on the other hand, adolescents will feel anxious if they are rejected and belittled by their peers (Santrock, 2014). For teenagers, friends are an important person in their life (Ardi, Ibrahim, & Said, 2012). It is characterized by the ability to understand other people. Teens seek out their peers because they understand that they share the same fate. Through peers, adolescents get feedback about their abilities and know the pros and cons of their actions (Monks & Knoers, 2013). For adolescents, friends are a source of support and a place to share and to build friendships (Kenny et al., 2013; Santrock, 2014; Collie, Martin, Papworth, & Ginns, 2016). Besides, peers are very useful for adolescents to develop independence and their behavior is influenced by their peers (De Goede et al., 2009; Papalia, Old, & Feldman, 2009; Ali & Asrori, 2011; Ardi et al., 2012; Jahja, 2013; Santrock, 2016). Therefore, for students to be accepted in their environment, students must have interpersonal relationship skills (Jahja, 2013).

Interpersonal relationship skills are a crucial ability for individuals as social beings to relate to other people both in the short and long term, where individuals depend on each other, need each other to share feelings, thoughts, carry out joint activities and have emotional bonds (Jackson-Dwyer, 2014; DeVito, 2015; Passanisi, Nuovo, Urgese, & Pirrone, 2015; Kleptsova & Balabanov, 2016). Interpersonal relationship skills in adolescence are characterized by the establishment of friendship, self-disclosure, emotional support, acceptance, and joy (Papalia, Old, & Feldman, 2009; Kenny et al., 2013). In adolescence, friendship is the most important relationship(Rubin, Dwyer, Booth-LaForce, Kim, Burgess, & Rose-Krasnor, 2004) and at this time, adolescents have many close friends (Kenny et al., 2013).

The results of previous research stated that the description of the interpersonal relationships of junior high school students was on average in the low category (Sari & Muhari, 2013). There are 70% of junior high school students claiming to have poor relationship problems with their friends, such as being ostracized, being ridiculed, having an unpleasant classroom atmosphere, lack of socializing, lack of cohesiveness, and selfishness. Low interpersonal relationships will affect the association of teenagers. Adolescents who have low interpersonal relationship skills will have difficulty adjusting to the environment and have difficulty getting along with their friends (Tirmidzi, Nursalim, Pratiwi, & Setiawati, 2013). Du Plooy (2015) also states that many adolescents lack the skills to maintain interpersonal relationships effectively in their environment.

Low student interpersonal relationship skills can lead to anti-social behavior such as aggressive behavior, fighting, and so on (Santrock, 2014). A bullying phenomenon is also a form of low student interpersonal relationship skills. Based on data from the Indonesian Child Protection Commission (KPAI) in 2011-2019 there were 37381 cases of bullying committed by teenagers in both educational and social media settings, the number reached 2473 reports and the trend continues to increase (Kpai.go.id, 2020). The highest reports received by the KPAI are teenagers facing the law. Based on these data, it can be understood that bullying is a very serious case. If bullying behavior continues to increase, there will be many negative impacts received by both the perpetrator and the victim, and one of the causes is the low interpersonal skills of students.

This data is supported by the results of research by Burk & Laursen (2005) which states that low interpersonal relationships lead to conflict. This conflict can lead to a fight or a break in the teenager. In general, the impact of conflict experienced by teenage boys is more dangerous than the conflict experienced by women (Burk & Laursen, 2005). Low student interpersonal relationships will harm academic achievement and can result in decisions to quit school (Du Plooy, 2015). This shows that low interpersonal relationship skills will harm adolescents.

The conditions described above are relevant to the circumstances experienced by students at SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan. Based on sociometric data, it was found that there were students who were isolated and there were some students who were friends with certain groups. Also, based on the results of observations and interviews with Guidance and Counseling (BK) teachers on January 22, 2019, it was found that students found it difficult to build good relationships with peers, students did not respect friends, beat friends for no apparent reason, students are still reluctant to greet friends when meeting other students who are not known, lack of cohesiveness, do not care about the difficulties faced by friends, use harsh and disrespectful words

that hurt friends' feelings, some students find it difficult to express their wishes to friends, some students like to be alone, some students give up on their friends' taunts, and make fun of each other, which eventually results in fights.

Alleviating students' interpersonal relationship skills problems can be done through guidance and counseling services with creative and innovative techniques, namely assertiveness training in group formats. The use of the group format is considered quite effective in developing students' interpersonal relationship skills such as effective communication, tolerance, responsibility, broadening horizons by utilizing group dynamics (Prayitno, 2017). Each student is free to interact and express their respective opinions so that intimacy is established, understands the characteristics of friends, supports each other, and respects fellow group members (Alizamar, 2012).

Through assertiveness training in the group format, a person can develop honest relationships with others, know himself better, and feel more confident in interpersonal relationships. Students who experience interpersonal relationship problems need to be trained to be able to build more effective interpersonal relationships with peers, creating a warm and friendly atmosphere (Santrock, 2003). Corey (Suryawati, 2018) explains that assertiveness training is an exercise that can help individuals develop their ability to relate to other people. Individuals can express feelings, thoughts and desires firmly without disturbing the rights of others. Assertiveness training teaches individuals how to behave assertively in the various social situations they face, and how to defend what should be done without violating rights and hurting others (Corey, 2009; Spiegler & Guevremont, 2010).

Through assertiveness training techniques, groups of individuals can learn to build interpersonal relationships at home, work, school, and in the community (Corey, 2009). Assertiveness training group format is useful for (1) individuals who have difficulty expressing feelings of anger and irritation, (2) individuals who have difficulty saying no, (3) individuals who are too polite and let others take advantage of them, (4) difficult individuals expressing feelings of affection and difficulty in giving positive responses to others, (5) individuals who feel they have no right to express their thoughts, beliefs, and feelings to others, and (6) individuals who have social phobia/fear of starting relationships with others (Corey, 2009).

One of the goals of assertiveness training is to teach students to be able to be assertive but still understand the feelings of others. Being assertive doesn't mean being aggressive. Truly assertive students do not express themselves in any way and ignore the feelings of others (Corey, 2009). Assertiveness training fosters awareness in students that they have the right to defend themselves from oppression by others and can build good social relationships with others (Avsar & Alkaya, 2017). A person can be more assertive, honest with his feelings, and desires with assertive behavior (Suryawati, 2018). Avsar & Alkaya (2017) states that the use of assertiveness training can improve interpersonal relationships with parents, siblings, peers, and increase academic achievement at school.

The success and failure of students in learning, career, and social are determined by the interpersonal relationships they have. Given the importance of fostering interpersonal relationships for students and the importance of organizing counseling in schools to help students optimize their potential in the personal, social, learning, and career fields as well as the many social problems that students experience at school, students need to be helped to improve interpersonal relationship skills. so that students feel happy when dealing with peers. Therefore, researchers are interested in researching the use of group format Assertiveness Training to improve students' interpersonal relationship skills.

Method

This study uses a quantitative approach, with a quasi-experimental research method. The experimental design chosen by the researchers was the non-equivalent control group design. This pattern uses two groups consisting of one control group and one experimental group. Assertiveness group format training activities will be held 2 times a week for 10 meetings, with 2 assessments (pretest and posttest) and 8 treatments. This is done so that consistency in providing treatment gets more effective results.The experimental group will be given an assertiveness training group format, and the control group will be given group guidance services, the topic and number of treatments given are the same as the experimental group. The implementation plan is as follows.

Table 1. Activity Implementation Design

Meeting	Theory	Activity Description
I	Carrying out a pretest	1. The counselor/researcher says hello and thank you and introduces himself to the students. 2. Counselors/researchers administer questionnaires (pretest) to students. 3. Analyze the pretest results and determine the experimental and control groups.
II	Build relationships with new friends	1. The counselor welcomes group members openly 2. The counselor explains the meaning, purpose, benefits, and procedures for group format assertiveness training activities.
III	Assertiveness	
IV	Honesty	3. The counselor and group members get to know each other and continue with a series of names (games).
V	Help each other in kindness	4. The counselor raises the topic and discusses the topic in-depth with group members.
VI	Emotional support	5. The counselor asks group members to tell openly about problems experienced in interpersonal relationships and what to do when problems arise.
VII	Empathy	
VIII	Self Disclosure	
IX	Conflict Management	6. The counselor and group members distinguish between assertive and non-assertive behavior from the problems raised (the problems raised are related to the topic of discussion) and determine the expected behavior change. 7. Group members role-play according to the problems in the topic of discussion (role-play using scripts that have been prepared and have been adapted to the topic of discussion and problems of interpersonal relationships). 8. The counselor provides verbal feedback to group members who role-play by reading the script. 9. The counselor provides a model to group members according to what is written on the script. 10. The counselor provides positive reinforcement and appreciation. 11. The counselor provides the opportunity for group members to practice according to the expected targets. 12. Group members repeat the exercise without the assistance of a counselor. 13. The counselor asks group members to practice the behaviors that are trained in their daily life. 14. The counselor stops providing services (Nursalim, 2013).
X	Carrying out the Posttest	1. 1. The counselor explains the intent and purpose of giving the posttest. 2. 2. The counselor asks group members to do a post-test. 3. 3. The counselor collects the posttest results.

The topics in this activity were designed based on the research variable sub-indicators. Based on the planned topics, it is hoped that it can help in improving students' interpersonal relationships. The implementation of group guidance for the control group is carried out based on group guidance services in general (Prayitno, 2017), the material and number of treatments are the same as the experimental group.

The subjects in this study were selected using a non-random sampling technique, with a purposive sampling method. This method was chosen based on certain considerations (Sugiyono, 2012). The subjects

in this study were students of class VIII SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan, namely classes VIII3 and VIII5 who were selected based on certain considerations. As for the consideration of the researcher using purposive sampling in determining the research, the subject is: (1) Determining the class of the research subject based on the guidance of the counseling teacher, because the class based on observation has symptoms of low interpersonal relationship skills, (2) the research subject is for students who have interpersonal relationships very high, high, medium, low, and (2) the use of assertiveness training format groups of 10 people as the experimental group and 10 people as the control group who were given group guidance services. Determining the number of group members not more than 10 people so that the discussion is broader and deeper.

Collecting data in this study using an interpersonal relationship instrument compiled by researchers using a Likert scale with 5 alternative answers to identify students' interpersonal relationship skills referring to aspects of the initiative, assertiveness, emotional support, openness, and conflict management (Buhrmester, Furman, Wittenberg, & Reis, 1988). The validity of the instrument was 0.535 (Pearson Correlation), and the reliability was 0.881 (Alpha Cronbach).

Data were analyzed descriptively to describe students' interpersonal relationship skills. Furthermore, the data were analyzed using non-parametric statistics. The data analysis techniques used were the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test and the Kolmogorov Smirnov 2 Independent Samples. The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test is used to determine the difference between two pairs of data with two related samples (Siegel, 2011). Meanwhile, Kolmogorov Smirnov 2 Independent Samples were used to test the differences between the two groups of samples taken from the same population (Siegel, 2011).

Results and Discussion

Based on the results of the pretest, it was found that the level of interpersonal relationship skills of class VIII students of SMP Negeri 1 Panyabungan on average was in the high category. However, there are still some students who have interpersonal relationship skills in the medium and low categories. Based on the results of the pretest, 10 people who have very high, high, medium, and low levels of interpersonal relationship skills were selected to be treated. The number of research subjects selected in the experimental group is the same as the number of subjects in the control group. The basis for selecting heterogeneous group members is to create group dynamics. Data descriptions of interpersonal relationship skills in the experimental and control groups can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 1. Classification of Students' Interpersonal Relationship Skills at Pretest and Posttest

Interval	Category	Experiment Group		Control Group	
		Pretest	Posttest	Pretest	Posttest
≥ 224	Very high	1	2	1	1
$182-223$	High	2	8	2	6
$140-181$	Medium	5	-	5	3
$98-139$	Low	2	-	2	-
≤ 97	Very Low	-	-	-	-

Based on Table 2, it can be seen that there are differences in students' interpersonal relationship skills in the experimental group before and after being given assertiveness training in the group format. Student interpersonal relationships at the pretest were in the very high category as many as 1 people, 2 students were in the high category, 5 students were in the medium category, and 2 students were in a low category. After being given the treatment, there was an increase in student interpersonal relationships which can be seen from the posttest results as many as 2 students were in the very high category, and 8 students were in the high category.

The control group also experienced changes before and after being given group guidance services. 1 student's interpersonal relationship skills at the pretest were in the very high category, 2 students were in the high category, 5 students were in the medium category, and 2 students were in a low category. After being given the treatment there was an increase in students' interpersonal relationship skills. This can be seen from the results of the posttest as many as 1 student is in the very high category, 6 students are in the high category,

and 3 students are in the medium category. Based on the results of the pretest and posttest above, the interpersonal relationship skills in the experimental group and the control group both experienced an increase. However, the increase in the experimental group was more significant than the control group. The increase that occurred in the experimental group and control group can also be seen in the diagram below.
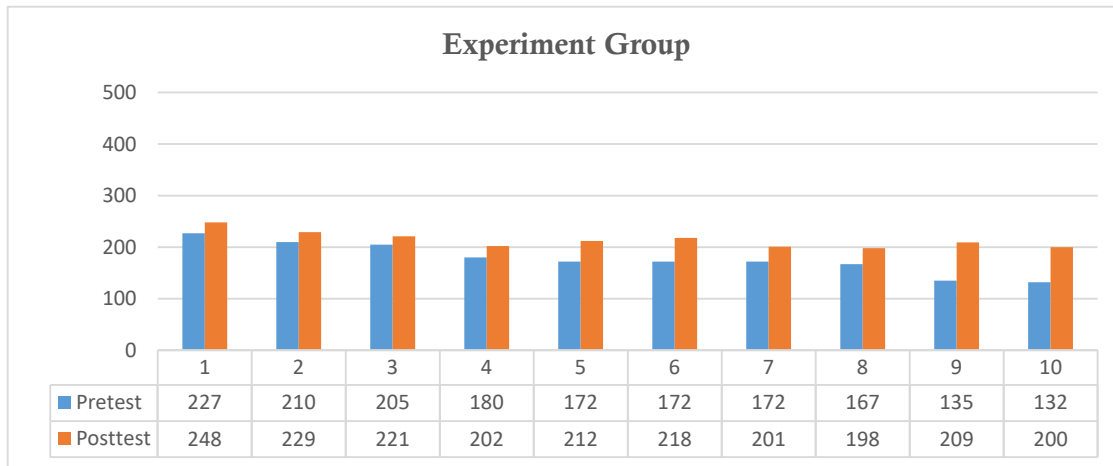
Experiment Group

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pretest	227	210	205	180	172	172	172	167	135	132
Posttest	248	229	221	202	212	218	201	198	209	200

Figure 1. Students' Interpersonal Relationship Skills Experiment Group

Based on Figure 1, it can be seen that there are differences in students' interpersonal relationship skills before and after being treated using assertiveness group format training. Of the 10 students who received treatment, all students experienced an increase in scores. The average score of the increase in interpersonal relationship skills in the experimental group was 213.8.
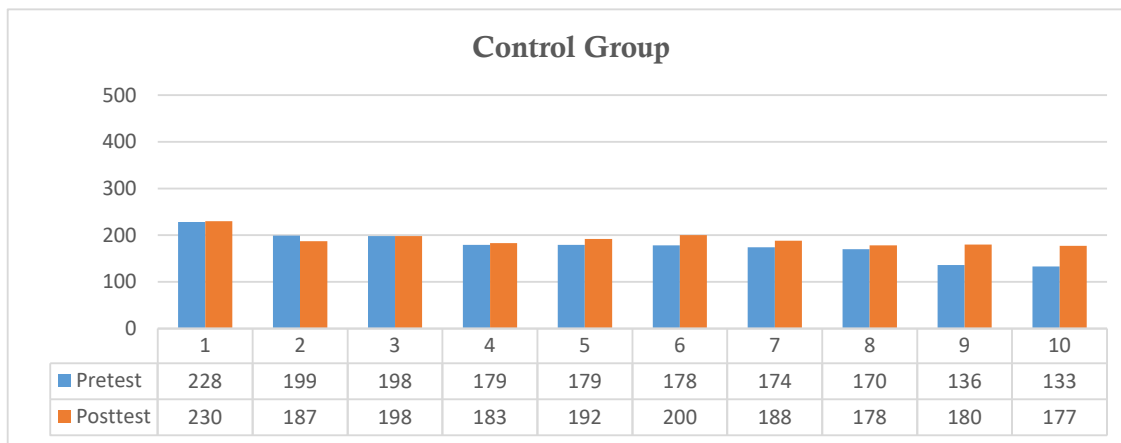
Control Group

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Pretest	228	199	198	179	179	178	174	170	136	133
Posttest	230	187	198	183	192	200	188	178	180	177

Figure 2. Interpersonal Relations Skills Levels of Control Group Students

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that there are differences in students' interpersonal relationship skills before and after being given group guidance services. Of the 10 students who received treatment, 8 students experienced an increase, 1 person experienced a decrease and 1 person did not experience an increase and did not experience a decrease. The average score of the increase in interpersonal relationship skills in the experimental group was 191.3. To find out the statistical difference between the two groups, it can be seen in the table below.

Table 3. Test The Differences Between The Experiment Group And The Control Group

		Interpersonal Relationship Skills
Most Extreme Differences	*Absolute*	,700
	Positive	,000
	Negative	-,700
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1,565
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,015

Based on Table 3, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z value is 1.565 with a significance value of Asymp.Sig. (2-tailed) of 0.015 or a probability of <0.05 (0.015 <0.05). Based on the research results, it can be concluded that group format assertiveness training is more effective for improving students' interpersonal relationship skills than using conventional group guidance services.

Interpersonal relationship skills are an important element for students to be able to establish harmonious, good, and effective social relationships with peers. Peers are a place to get motivation and let go of dependence from parents and other adults. The results of research by Lubis, Daharnis, & Syukur (2019) show that students' interpersonal relationship skills are in the high category with an achievement of 78%, and the rest of 22% is in the medium and low categories. This is by the results of research conducted that students' interpersonal relationship skills are on average in the high category, and some are in the medium and low categories. The level of student interpersonal relationships is influenced by several factors, namely differences in the race (McGowan, 2016), differences in gender, and age (Kenny et al., 2013), personal characteristics, sociocultural changes, emotional stress (Kleptsova & Balabanov, 2016), and happiness in life (La Greca & Harrison, 2005). Interpersonal relationships develop well because of support and openness in relationships that allow solving individual problems in groups (Kenny et al., 2013; Lubis et al., 2019).

Students whose interpersonal skills are in the medium and low categories need to be assisted by a counselor, one of which is by providing training through assertiveness training in group format techniques. Assertiveness training in group format proved to be effective for students in improving students' interpersonal relationship skills. Assertiveness training in a group format is a learning program designed to develop individual competence about other people, teaching individuals to express their feelings and thoughts honestly, freely without causing others to be threatened. Group format assertiveness training also teaches individuals that they have the same rights, and the right to be themselves when dealing with others (Nursalim, 2013). Lin, Shiah, Chang, Lai, Wang, & Chou (2004) stated that assertiveness training is designed to improve individual assertive behavior that can help and change the way they see themselves, build self-confidence, interpersonal communication, and individual life happiness. Assertiveness training is used to improve social skills and be able to express oneself in a socially acceptable way. Assertiveness training is suitable for adolescents because it can increase assertive behavior and adolescent social skills (Cecen-erogul & Zengel, 2009).

Assertiveness training teaches individuals how to behave assertively in the various social situations they face, and how to defend what should be done without violating rights and hurting others (Corey, 2009; Spiegler & Guevremont, 2010). Through assertiveness group format training, students also gain the ability to say no, make requests, express feelings both positive and negative (such as love, affection, friendship, disappointment, anger, resentment, sadness), open and end conversations (Lin et al., 2004; Alberti & Emmons, 2017; Daulay, Daharnis, & Afdal, 2018; Lizarraga, Ugarte, Cardelle-Elawar, Iriarte, & Baquedano, 2003). Also, assertiveness group format training helps improve students' understanding of equality between individuals in interpersonal relationships. That is, no one feels superior to other friends, and no one feels intimidated in interpersonal relationships, group members can express anger naturally, become more sensitive to what other people need, can be assertive when experiencing unpleasant treatment from friends or others (Alberti & Emmons, 2017).

Assertiveness training in group format takes place using role-playing, training, and modeling methods (Corey, 2009; Spiegler & Guevremont, 2010; Miltenberger, 2012). Modeling is considered very effective and efficient to teach assertive skills to students. Counselors and students both play roles to teach students how to be assertive without hurting or violating the rights of others and shaping the behavior desired by students (Corey, 2009). This behavior is practiced in front of the counselor, then practiced in everyday life. Through modeling in assertiveness training, individuals feel comfort and happiness in dealing with other people

(Corey, 2009; Spiegler & Guevremont, 2010). Therefore, the increase in the experimental group was greater than that in the control group. Because in the assertiveness training the group format provides training, modeling, and feedback to students on the skills being taught to improve interpersonal relationship skills so that students' skills are further improved by the presence of these exercises. Meanwhile, the control group only discussed material according to the topics that had been prepared by the researcher.

The success of the assertiveness group format training is supported by the results of previous research. The results of previous research indicate that assertiveness training can reduce students' social anxiety in fostering interpersonal relationships (Niusha, Farghadani, & Safari, 2012). After participating in assertiveness training, students become more confident, not shy about expressing what they think, can make requests politely to others, and improve interpersonal relationships with peers. Besides, assertiveness training can also improve students' assertiveness in interpersonal relationships (Cecen-erogul & Zengel, 2009; Avsar & Alkaya, 2017). Assertiveness is one of the attitudes needed in interpersonal relationships. Students who have assertive abilities in interpersonal relationships will not be easily influenced by other people, can defend their rights when others do not give their rights, and can place themselves according to the conditions that occur. Assertive individuals are generally liked by others because they can express their feelings without hurting others and place others equally in interpersonal relationships.

Rahmi (2016) states that group guidance uses assertiveness training effectively to improve students' interpersonal relationship skills. The use of assertiveness training is more effective than group guidance without assertiveness training. Sembiring (2016) also found that group guidance services using assertiveness training were more effective at improving student interpersonal communication compared to group guidance services without assertiveness training. Interpersonal communication is one of the determinants of whether or not an individual's relationship with others. If good communication, then good interpersonal relationships. Conversely, communication can also be a factor that causes the breakdown of interpersonal relationships that are fostered. Therefore, individuals need to have interpersonal skills that can be learned through assertiveness group format training.

Based on the results of the research, the increase in student interpersonal relationship skills is more effective using group format assertiveness training, because it has several advantages, including (1) group format assertiveness training is more efficient than those done individually because instruction and modeling are presented in front of all group members, (2) each group member can learn by watching other group members practice assertively and receive feedback about their appearance, (3) group members can evaluate the appearance of other group members and provide feedback, (4) with the number of group members participating in role-playing (role-playing) so that it can be decided which behavior the client will apply in his life, and (5) there are reinforcement and support from group members that can help individuals to be more confident about the behavior that will be applied later (Miltenberger, 2012). Therefore, the increase in students' interpersonal relationship skills in the experimental group using assertiveness training in the group format was greater than the control group that was given treatment without assertiveness training in the group format. This indicates that the counseling service will be more effective if it uses creative and innovative approaches or techniques for the problems faced by students.

Conclusion

Students' interpersonal relationship skills are on average in the high category, but some students have medium and low interpersonal relationship skills. Students who have moderate and low interpersonal relationship skills need to be assisted by implementing assertiveness group format training. The results showed that assertiveness training in group format was effective for improving students' interpersonal relationship skills. There was a significant difference before and after being given an assertiveness training group format. Before being treated, students have interpersonal relationship skills in the high, medium, low category. However, after being given assertiveness training, the group format of students' interpersonal relationship skills increased in the very high and high categories.

The results of this study can be a reference for counseling teachers to carry out services in schools using assertiveness group format training to help alleviate students' interpersonal skills problems. Besides, the results of this study are also useful for future researchers to develop research on assertiveness group format training and interpersonal relationship skills.

Acknowledgment

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Article Information (Supplementary)