

Effectiveness of revival assertiveness programs to increase assertiveness as an effort to address people pleasing behavior in High School Students

Efektivitas revival assertiveness programs untuk meningkatkan asertivitas sebagai upaya mengatasi perilaku *people pleasing* pada siswa SMA

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ARTICLE INFO:	ABSTRACT
Received: 2025-12-26 Revised: 2025-08-16 Accepted: 2025-08-19	<p>People-pleasing behavior can have negative impacts, particularly on adolescents, as it may hinder their ability to express personal opinions and needs openly. One approach to addressing this issue is by enhancing assertiveness. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the Revival Assertiveness Programs as a medium to develop assertive communication in adolescents with people-pleasing tendencies. The study employed a quasi-experimental method using a one-group pre-test post-test design within a within-subject framework. The population in this study consisted of students at SMA Negeri 1 Lembang. A total of 38 students were selected through purposive sampling based on the criteria of having high levels of people-pleasing and low levels of assertiveness. Data were collected using three standardized instruments: the Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire, the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), and the Inner Child Scale (ICS), all of which were adapted for the context of this research. Data analysis was conducted using normality testing and paired sample t-test. The results showed a significance value of $p < .05$, indicating that the Revival Assertiveness Programs had a significant effect on increasing assertive behavior and reducing people-pleasing tendencies. These findings suggest that the program is effective in fostering assertive communication among adolescent people-pleasers, particularly those influenced by wounded inner child experiences.</p>
Keywords: Assertiveness, illustrated books, inner child, people-pleasing, quasi-experiment	ABSTRACT <p>Perilaku <i>people-pleasing</i> memberikan dampak negatif bagi sebagian orang sehingga perlu adanya solusi untuk mengatasi perilaku tersebut. Salah satu yang dapat dilakukan adalah dengan meningkatkan asertivitas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menguji keberhasilan Revival Assertiveness Programs sebagai media untuk mengembangkan komunikasi asertif pada remaja <i>people-pleasing</i>. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode eksperimen kuasi <i>one group pre-test post-test design</i> dengan jenis <i>within subject design</i>. Populasi dalam penelitian ini yaitu siswa SMA Negeri 1 Lembang. Sampel berjumlah 38 siswa yang dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling, dengan kriteria memiliki tingkat <i>people-pleasing</i> yang tinggi dan tingkat asertivitas yang rendah. Pengumpulan data dilakukan menggunakan tiga instrumen terstandar, yaitu <i>The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire</i>, <i>Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS)</i>, dan <i>Inner Child Scale (ICS)</i>, yang telah disesuaikan untuk konteks penelitian. Analisis data dilakukan dengan analisis uji normalitas dan uji T berpasangan. Hasil uji T berpasangan menunjukkan signifikansi $p < .05$ yang menunjukkan bahwa Revival Assertiveness Programs memiliki pengaruh terhadap sikap asertivitas dan sikap <i>people-pleasing</i> dan mampu untuk mengembangkan komunikasi asertif pada remaja <i>people-pleaser</i> akibat <i>wounded inner child</i>.</p>
Kata Kunci: Asertivitas, buku ilustrasi, eksperimen kuasi, inner child, <i>people-pleasing</i> .	
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1. INTRODUCTION

People-pleasing is a psychological phenomenon that often occurs in social life. According to Katarina (2021), out of 102 respondents from various regions, 20.6% experienced people-pleasing. This phenomenon is also commonly found among adolescents. Adolescence is a developmental stage filled with social pressures, both from peer environments and education (Sholekah et al., 2025). At this stage, peer influence tends to be stronger than the influence of adults such as parents or teachers (Rohyati & Purwandari, 2015). This condition encourages adolescents to develop people-pleasing behavior as a social adaptation strategy. They try to build a self-image that is liked by the group and avoid behaviors that may lead to rejection (Shofawati, 2023). This aligns with Braiker's explanation (in Yusuf, 2021), which states that people-pleasing behavior stems from the habit of focusing too much on the needs of others while sacrificing oneself. Individuals with people-pleasing traits usually hold the principle of pleasing others, even if it means neglecting their own desires and needs. People-pleasing is a behavior where individuals always try to say or do good things for those around them, even when it goes against what they truly think or feel (Burma et al., 2024).

People-pleasing behavior has a significant impact on an individual's mental health and quality of life. Braiker (in Shofawati, 2023) explains that people-pleasers usually struggle to make decisions, lack a firm stance, and feel the need for validation and approval from others. They tend to avoid conflict and find it difficult to express their feelings or disagreements due to fear of confrontation. As a result, they often feel guilty when prioritizing themselves over others and frequently apologize without a clear reason. If left unchecked, this behavior not only harms the individual psychologically but also worsens the quality of social relationships. People-pleasing behavior can lead to anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and loss of self-confidence (Burma et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to develop strategies that help individuals change their responses to social pressure. If this behavior continues without intervention, it will not only damage the individual psychologically but also affect social relationships and the broader community's mental health.

Several factors contribute to the emergence of people-pleasing behavior, including the influence of family environment, modern social pressure, and negative childhood experiences (Alfahmi et al., 2023). Seltzer (as cited in Shofawati, 2023) states that parents who place high demands on children to always behave well and bring pride, without considering their emotional needs, can indirectly shape a tendency toward people-pleasing. In addition, childhood experiences such as neglect, abuse, or lack of affection can hurt the inner child, causing individuals in adulthood to excessively seek validation and affection (Putri et al., 2022; Surianti, 2022; Ceaser, 2021). These factors push individuals to overly adjust themselves and ignore their own needs in order to be accepted by their surroundings. Sharapova (2019) also states that individuals with people-pleasing tendencies generally show low self-concept, hold negative views of themselves, and often display insecurity and self-blame. This condition is closely related to their limited ability to communicate assertively.

One of the most effective ways to reduce people-pleasing tendencies is by increasing assertiveness. Assertiveness is the ability to express thoughts, feelings, and needs honestly, responsibly, and without anxiety, while still respecting the rights of others (Willis & Daisley, 1995; Widyastuti, 2017). By developing assertiveness, individuals can stand up for their own rights without excessively trying to please others (Alfahmi et al., 2024). Unfortunately, research conducted by Yuliani et al. (2020) on 147 adolescents found that only 13.6% were able to communicate assertively, while 26.5% showed a tendency toward passive communication. This indicates that low assertiveness is one of the factors reinforcing people-pleasing behavior among adolescents, making it necessary to improve assertiveness as a preventive and intervention effort.

Wulansari (2023), in her research, conducted assertiveness training to reduce people-pleasing behavior among adolescents in a village in Sidoarjo. The results showed that assertiveness training had an impact on decreasing people-pleasing behavior in adolescents. Similar research was carried out by Sholekah et al. (2025), who used group counseling services with assertiveness training techniques to reduce people-pleasing behavior in students. The findings revealed that group counseling with assertiveness training techniques was effective in reducing people-pleasing behavior among students. Meanwhile, the study by Muti'ah et al. (2025) aimed to examine the effectiveness of group counseling using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach and role-playing techniques in lowering people-pleasing tendencies. The analysis showed that this approach was effective in reducing people-pleasing behavior in eight students, marked by a shift in thinking patterns from irrational to rational, which had a positive effect on their emotions and behavior.

Our research used illustrated books as a medium to introduce people-pleasing behavior and assertive behavior. In addition, the series of interventions provided was quite different from some previous studies. The intervention began with guided literacy sessions led by the researcher along with the participation of the research subjects. This was aimed at giving the subjects an understanding of people-pleasing tendencies and how to overcome them. The second session involved a revival mission, which included case studies and role-play practices of assertive behavior. In this session, subjects were given several situations where they could implement assertive responses based on what they had learned in the previous session. During the reflection session, subjects were instructed to share what they had gained after completing the first and second sessions. This research will be conducted at SMA Negeri 1 Lembang. The school was chosen as the research site because it is a leading school in West Bandung that pays attention to mental health. The school agreed to collaborate in this research as it provides benefits for students' mental well-being, which also allowed the researcher access to the necessary resources. The subjects were high school students aged 15–17, chosen based on the consideration that people-pleasing behavior is commonly found among teenagers.

In line with this, the author designed the Revival Assertiveness Programs as an effort to improve individual assertiveness. The Revival Assertiveness Programs use illustrated

books as a medium to provide knowledge to adolescents about the phenomenon of people-pleasing and how to communicate assertively. Illustrated books were chosen because they are generally easier to understand, as visual language can open alternative ways of approaching a book. In addition, engaging illustrations can psychologically foster feelings of happiness and joy in the reader, which in turn can stimulate their understanding of the content (Wahhab et al., 2023). The name “Revival” is taken from the English word meaning recovery or rebirth from painful past experiences.

Through the Revival Assertiveness Programs, individuals will be guided to engage in activities that help them develop assertive communication. This study hypothesizes that the Revival Assertiveness Programs will be able to improve assertiveness and reduce people-pleasing behavior in adolescents. The researcher believes this because the program contains relevant stories that can raise adolescents’ awareness of people-pleasing behavior, a mission to enhance assertiveness through case studies and role plays, and a reflective session at the end. The hypothesis of this study is that the Revival Assertiveness Programs are effective in increasing assertiveness in adolescents who engage in people-pleasing due to a wounded inner child.

2. METHODS

This study used a quasi-experimental one group pre-test post-test design with a within-subject design type (see Table 1). This method was carried out with the aim of exploring and comparing participants’ knowledge of assertive communication attitudes and people-pleasing, as observed before and after the given intervention. The study was conducted only on one experimental group without a control group for comparison, so all participants received the same treatment. The independent variable in this study was the Revival Assertiveness Programs, and the dependent variables were assertive communication and people-pleasing.

Table 1. One Group Pre-test Post-test Design Schemes

Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
X1	O	X2

The initial stage carried out was a literature review and a pilot test on 133 students using three measurement tools: the Inner Child Scale (Putra, 2023); The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire (Yusuf, 2021); and the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Goral et al., 2015). Once the tools were proven valid and usable, the researcher began the initial selection using the Inner Child Scale (Putra, 2023) to determine the subjects’ level of inner child. The researcher then conducted a pre-test on 191 students using the same measurement tools as in the pilot test, and narrowed the participants down to 38 students through descriptive-quantitative statistical analysis to select those with the highest scores on The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire (Yusuf, 2021) and the lowest scores on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Goral et al., 2015).

Next, the researcher carried out the intervention through the Revival Assertiveness Programs, which consisted of joint literacy sessions, case studies and roleplay, as well as reflection. The final stage was administering a post-test using two measurement tools, namely The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire (Yusuf, 2021) and the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Goral et al., 2015), on the same day. After completing the implementation stage, the researcher processed the data and evaluated the overall research process.

Subjects

The subjects in this study were 38 students of SMAN 1 Lembang. The recruitment technique used was non-random sampling with purposive sampling, in which participants were selected based on criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria for the subjects were as follows: 1) Male or female adolescents; 2) Aged 15–19 years; 3) Students in Indonesia.

Instruments

This study used three measurement instruments: The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire (Braiker, 2001), adapted by Yusuf (2024); the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), adapted by Goral et al. (2015); and the Inner Child Scale (ICS), adapted by Putra (2023). The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire consists of 24 items divided into three dimensions: people-pleasing mindset (8 items), people-pleasing behavior (8 items), and people-pleasing feeling (8 items). The items in this questionnaire are answered using two response options: true or false.

The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS), adapted by Goral et al. (2015), consists of 30 items, divided into 14 favorable and 16 unfavorable items. The items in this instrument are answered using a six-point Likert scale: Very uncharacteristic of me (-3), Rather uncharacteristic of me (-2), Slightly uncharacteristic of me (-1), Slightly characteristic of me (+1), Rather characteristic of me (+2), and Very characteristic of me (+3). The Wounded Inner Child Scale, adapted by Putra (2023), consists of 42 items divided into six dimensions: behavior dysfunction (2 items), self-sabotage (7 items), self-defeating behaviors (9 items), trauma-related behaviors (5 items), childhood attachment issues (11 items), and codependency (8 items). The items in this instrument are answered using two response options: yes or no.

Data Analysis Methods

The data processing technique was carried out using SPSS software version 26.0. The first statistical analysis conducted was the normality test of the pre-test and post-test to determine whether the obtained data were normally distributed or not. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was used because the participants in this study were fewer than 50 (Ningsih & Fadillah, 2019 in Valencia et al., 2024). If the data were normally distributed, a Paired-Samples t-Test (t-Test for Differences) would then be conducted to examine whether there were differences before

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and after the treatment was given to the participants. The data entered were the total scores of each subject on the pre-test and post-test scores.

3. Results and Discussion

Results

Table 2. Subject Demographics

Characteristics	Amounts (n)	Percentages (%)
Gender		
Female	25	65.8%
Male	13	34.2%
Total	38	
Age		
15 years old	5	13.2%
16 years old	27	71.1%
17 years old	6	15.8%

A total of 38 students were obtained with the highest scores on the Inner Child Scale and The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire instruments through descriptive-quantitative statistical analysis screening. The subjects consisted of 25 females and 13 males, with an age range of 15–17 years (see Table 2).

Table 3. Subject Pre-test and Post-test Results

Subjects	Assertiveness		People-pleasing		Subjects	Assertiveness		People-pleasing	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
S-1	60	9	19	19	S-20	-28	42	16	11
S-2	-35	-2	16	22	S-21	-45	19	16	18
S-3	-16	-1	22	18	S-22	-17	24	18	21
S-4	-25	11	18	12	S-23	4	5	16	12
S-5	-22	19	15	12	S-24	-44	17	18	13
S-6	-53	0	20	20	S-25	-30	-4	18	21
S-7	-6	-1	14	13	S-26	-34	16	18	19
S-8	30	8	15	15	S-27	7	35	17	15
S-9	-6	2	17	18	S-28	-38	11	17	19
S-10	-20	14	16	17	S-29	-36	27	19	14
S-11	-39	-7	15	17	S-30	-39	-6	15	18
S-12	-44	13	15	19	S-31	-57	13	16	14
S-13	40	3	20	16	S-32	59	18	20	20
S-14	-35	29	19	12	S-33	-43	19	18	13
S-15	-20	8	18	16	S-34	-23	-7	17	5
S-16	-36	16	18	16	S-35	-42	35	17	8
S-17	-25	6	20	23	S-36	14	7	18	18
S-18	34	12	18	17	S-37	-8	-6	16	18
S-19	-19	0	20	17	S-38	-57	19	17	17

The pre-test and post-test above used the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule instrument (Goral et al., 2015) to measure assertiveness and the Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire instrument (Yusuf, 2021). The pre-test and post-test results were obtained from the total scores of each subject on all items from both instruments, which were then used as data for further statistical analysis. Based on the total pre-test and post-test scores, it was found that each subject had varying score comparisons on both instruments (see Table 3). To measure assertiveness and the Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire (Yusuf, 2021), pre-tests and post-tests were conducted. The pre-test and post-test results using the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (Goral et al., 2015) showed that each subject had different score comparisons, as can be seen from both instruments (see Table 3).

Table 4. Rathus Assertiveness Schedule Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig
PRE-TEST	.245	38	.173	.890	38	.233
POST-TEST	.144	38	.200*	.986	38	.986

Table 5. The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire Normality Test

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig
PRE-TEST	.138	38	.067	.956	38	.138
POST-TEST	.142	38	.050	.958	38	.164

The table above presents the results of the normality test, which aims to evaluate whether the data in a group or variable are normally distributed (Fahmeyzan et al., 2018). In this study, the Shapiro-Wilk normality test was used because the number of participants was <50 (Ningsih & Fadillah, 2019). Data are considered normally distributed if the sig.á value is greater than.05, and not normally distributed otherwise (Quraisy, 2020). The Shapiro-Wilk normality test results for the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule instrument showed a value of.0233 for the pre-test and.986 for the post-test (see Table 4), while the Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire instrument showed values of.138 for the pre-test and.164 for the post-test (see Table 5), both of which are greater than.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that the data distribution of both the pre-test and post-test from the two instruments is considered normal.

Table 6. Paired T-Test Analysis of Rathus Assertiveness Schedule

	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference						df	Sig (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t		
PRE-TEST- POST- TEST	-29.39474	33.64564	5.45804	-40.45378	-18.33569	-5.386	37	.000

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Table 7. Paired T-Test Analysis of the Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire

	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					t	df	Sig (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper			
PRE-TEST- POST-TEST	1.28947	3.81255	.61848	.03632	2.54263	2.085	37	.044

Paired t-test analysis is used to compare pre-test and post-test scores within the same group (Trijunanto, 2016). This test aims to determine whether there is an effect after giving a stimulus in the form of the Revival Assertiveness Programs as treatment. A difference is considered significant if the significance value (p-value) is less than 0.05 (Yani et al., 2023). The results of the analysis show a significance value of 0.000 on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule instrument (see table 6) and 0.044 on the Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire instrument (see table 7). This proves that the Revival Assertiveness Programs have an effect on increasing assertive behavior and reducing people-pleasing tendencies in adolescents.

Discussion

This research aims to examine the effectiveness of the Revival Assertiveness Programs as an intervention to address people-pleasing behavior in adolescents. The Revival Assertiveness Programs is designed to increase assertiveness in adolescents with people-pleasing tendencies caused by a wounded inner child, using illustrated books as the medium. The paired T-test results showed a significance value of .000 on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule instrument (see Table 6) and a significance value of .044 on The Disease to Please Triangle Questionnaire instrument (see Table 7), which proves that the Revival Assertiveness Programs had an effect on assertiveness and people-pleasing attitudes in adolescents. In addition to the paired T-test analysis results, improvements were also observed during the intervention, where participants showed better understanding of assertive communication and people-pleasing. This was evident from the positive feedback given by several students during roleplay and reflection activities.

The study involved 38 adolescents as participants, consisting of 13 male students and 25 female students, with ages ranging from 15 to 17 years. These demographic characteristics are considered relevant because adolescence is an important phase in psychosocial development, where individuals begin to form a personal identity and learn to set boundaries in social interactions. Moreover, the ages of 15–17 represent a period marked by increased intensity of social interactions, both in the school environment and in peer relationships, making assertiveness skills an increasingly important ability to possess at this stage.

The research we conducted is supported by Reed et al. (in Al'Ain & Mulyana, 2013), who stated that assertiveness training should include several components: didactic discussion, behavior rehearsal/role playing, and in vivo practice. Research by Wulansari (2023) showed

that assertiveness training can improve individuals' confidence in expressing opinions, communicating, and voicing their thoughts. Sholekah et al. (2025) conducted research using group counseling services with assertiveness training techniques to reduce people-pleasing behavior in students. The results showed that group counseling with assertiveness training techniques was effective in reducing people-pleasing behavior among students. Research by Mutí'ah et al. (2025) aimed to test the effectiveness of group counseling using the Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) approach and role-playing techniques in reducing people-pleasing attitudes.

The analysis showed that this approach effectively reduced people-pleasing attitudes in eight students, marked by a shift in mindset from irrational to rational, which positively influenced their emotions and behavior. Based on these studies, our research shares the same goal of increasing assertiveness in people-pleasing adolescents and shows similar results. The significant difference in this study lies in the intervention used. The Revival Assertiveness Program developed an intervention using an illustrated book with a visual and narrative approach. Illustrated books help adolescents better understand the material and build emotional connections (Asif et al., 2021). This proves that assertiveness can be enhanced through various techniques.

Assertive communication allows individuals to respect each other and express their emotions by stating what they feel. This helps people-pleasers, who usually cannot express their feelings or say no (Iskandar et al., 2023). Assertive behavior makes it easier for adolescents to socialize with others, express their feelings and desires honestly, avoid anxiety and discomfort caused by being unable to express opinions and emotions, and encourage curiosity, which can improve their cognitive abilities (Rohyati & Purwandari, 2015). Assertiveness activities focus on helping students improve their social and emotional skills.

The limitation of this study lies in the relatively short intervention duration. The Revival Assertiveness Program was carried out in three sessions over one week. This limited time allowed participants to gain an initial understanding of assertiveness concepts and people-pleasing behavior patterns rooted in childhood emotional wounds (wounded inner child), but it was not sufficient to encourage deep and sustainable behavioral change. Considering that the development of assertiveness and emotional healing requires a longer process, interventions with longer duration may produce stronger and more stable psychological impacts. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted in the form of longitudinal studies, so researchers can observe participants' development over a longer period, including the sustainability of assertive behavioral changes and the medium- to long-term effects of the intervention.

Conclusion

The results of the study show that the Revival Assertiveness Programs are effective in increasing assertive behavior and reducing people-pleasing tendencies among adolescents,

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particularly those with childhood emotional wounds (wounded inner child). This was proven through a paired sample t-test, which indicated a significant increase in assertiveness scores and a decrease in people-pleasing scores after the intervention.

In addition to the quantitative results, participants' understanding of the concept of assertive communication also improved, as seen in their active involvement in activities such as roleplay and reflection. These findings suggest that using illustrated books as a visual and narrative-based intervention is a relevant and effective approach in developing students' social-emotional skills.

Therefore, this research has important implications for high school student development, highlighting the need to integrate assertiveness training programs into school guidance and counseling activities. Creative media-based interventions such as illustrated books can serve as innovative alternatives to help students build a healthy self-identity, increase confidence in communication, and prevent unhealthy relationship patterns caused by the inability to clearly express needs and boundaries.

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