

## The Effectiveness of Group Counseling on *Coping Strategy of Problem Focused Coping and Emotional Focused Coping* to Increase the *Assertive Behavior*

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### Abstract

Assertive behavior in social live affects the way individuals adapt to their new environment, society, and understand their own rights and others. The inability to do adaptation leads individuals to be passive and aggressive. Thus, the present study attempted to examine the effectiveness of group counseling with the coping strategy of *problem focused coping* and *emotional focused coping* to increase the assertiveness of SMK Astrindo students in Tegal City. It used an experimental study with randomized pretest-posttest comparison group design by involving 21 students as the subjects of the study whose data were collected using The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) scale. Further, the collected data were analyzed using one way ANOVA. It resulted that all three experimental groups which used *problem focused coping*, *emotional focused coping*, and the combination of both achieved effectiveness in the assertiveness increase. Among three, the group with *emotional focused coping* appeared to get the most satisfying result indicated by the highest difference between pretest and posttest.

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## INTRODUCTION

Assertiveness is the ability to communicate something that is wished, felt, and thought to people by considering their rights and feelings. (Alberti and Emmons 2008: 45). This behavior is a part of the expressing true feelings, striving for rights, and refusing unreasonable requests (Rathus and Nevid, 2003).

One opinion about assertiveness (Sugiyono, 2005:112) states assertiveness is a form of one's behavior and actions indicating the following things, such as: 1) Behavior that frees someone to act based on his will and is disclosed to others' criticisms and suggestions to be better. 2) The ability to express one's rights without disadvantaging others. 3) having self-confidence, being able to express anything spontaneously (thoughts and feelings), much sought after, and admired by others.

Assertiveness is also a part of social skills related to social adaptation behavior and self-reliance (Milovanovic, Miladinovic, and Stojanovic, 2017). Those are related to the aspects of cognitive, behavior, and emotional factors. Another characteristic of assertiveness is individual willingness to express positive sides of others without expecting any return Garner (in Rohyati, and Hanung, 2015).

The positive and negative impact of assertiveness can be seen in one's social activities in which whenever he has got anxiety in a social interaction, it means that the person has lost his positive impact of assertiveness (Gambriil, 2006). Negative sides issues due to lack of assertiveness can be found in an adolescent who cannot communicate assertively due to the feeling of dependence, unlucky, low confidence, ungrateful (Ginting & Masykur, 2014). In fact, the main purpose of assertiveness is not only to realize the needs and problems faced, but also as an effort to solve problems (Shafiq, Naz, & Yousaf, 2015).

Considering the above explanation, assertiveness must be owned by students due to its benefits in learning. By acting assertively, students will have a sincere and honest relationship, communicate fairly and openly,

have self-confidence, be calm in dealing with others' critiques, and let others share opinions, while at the same time defending their own ideas. (Nurfaizal, 2015).

the author conducted this study following up research suggestions from (Kumar, 2016) in his study suggests interventions to increase assertiveness by using coping strategies. Coping strategies are divided into two, namely problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. The first one is any efforts made to reduce stress by developing skills or learning new skills to shift mindsets regarding the difficult situations. The second one is done to reduce stress by controlling emotional response Laazrus and Folkman in (Nurhayati, 2012).

In problem-focused coping, individuals will try to keep distance between themselves and stress through denial or avoidance where problem focused coping helps individuals deal with the source of stress (Nevid, Rathus & Greene, 2003).

one coping to avoid stress in achieving assertive behavior (Lazarus, and Folkman's, 1984) mention emotion-focused coping reduces a person's negative emotional response to a stressful condition for example, feeling ashamed, grieving the loss of someone, anxiety, fear, and frustration. This strategy is the only way to apply coping skills when the source of the stress is beyond the control of the person experiencing it. It is done by diverting focus and attention from the source of the problem, for example by sharing or writing about the problems being faced, meditation, or by praying.

Types of coping to use and their impact will depend on the kind of stress or problems faced (Maryam 2017). In a possibly constructive dynamic situation (hunger during disaster), the possible strategy used is problem-focused. However, in a difficult situation, such as the death of a partner, the coping strategy used is emotion focused because it motivates individuals to pray more, be patient and surrender. The success or failure of the coping will determine whether the reaction to stress will decrease and the fulfillment of various expected demands (Rutter, 2013).

Based on the preliminary study, it was known that the assertiveness of SMK Astrindo students was low, so the researchers attempted to increase it by providing coping strategy group counseling with problem-focused coping, emotional-focused coping, and the combination of both with hope that the students can adapt to their social environment through the increase in their assertiveness.

## METHODS

There were 21 students who had low assertiveness chosen using purposive sampling of 90 the tenth grade students majoring in automotive at SMK AstrindoTegal as the subjects of this study. Further, random assignment was applied to place them into three experimental groups.

In this study, The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule developed by (Rathus,1973) was adopted and used to measure the level of students' assertiveness (30 items). Since this scale originally uses English, back translation process was carried out. It is an adaptation technique done by re-translating content from the target language back to its source language in literal terms, aiming at maintaining the equivalence of meaning from source and target languages. Then, the researchers performed a correspondence to the owner of the scale to get permission to use the scale in this study. Based on the results of the validity test, the rtable of the instrument item was  $N = 7$  of 0.754, and the reliability was 0.978. Thus, the scale was

considered valid and reliable for use in this study.

The experimental procedures started with pretest. Once it was done, the intervention of group counseling with problem-focused coping was given for six times for group 1 by performing instrumental action, cautiousness, and negotiation. Another intervention, namely emotional-focused coping was given for six times for group 2 by having all members did escapism, minimalization, self-blame, and seeking meaning. In addition, the combination of both techniques were similarly given for six times for group 3 with time allotment of 45 minutes for each. Lastly, posttest was given to the subjects.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data showed that the students' assertiveness increased in terms of mean and standard deviation. First, the problem-focused coping group pretest was ( $M=46.285$ ;  $SD=2.811$ ), and for the post-test was ( $M=89.142$ ;  $SD=14.473$ ). Second, the emotional-focused coping group obtained pre-test score of ( $M=47.142$ ;  $SD=2.035$ ) and ( $M=113.000$ ;  $SD=8.366$ ) for the posttest. Third, the combination of the problem-focused coping group and the emotional-focused coping group obtained pre-test score of ( $M=46.428$ ,  $SD=3.101$ ) and for the post-test of ( $M=107.285$ ;  $SD=15.18458$ ). Of these data, the emotional-focused coping achieved the highest increase. In details, the data are presented in table 1.

**Table.1** Results of The Effectiveness testof group counseling Strategy Coping with *Problem Focused Coping, Emotional Focused Coping* and the combination to increase Assertive behaviour

Group	N	Pre Test		Post Test		T	p
		M	SD	M	SD		
(PFC)	7	46.29	2.81	89.14	14.47	8.71	<0.01
(EFC)	7	47.14	2.04	113.000	8.37	36.53	<0.01
(PFC + EFC)	7	46.43	3.10	107.29	15.18	9.61	<0.01
F		0.20		28.70			
P		0.05		<0.01			

Based on the results of one way ANOVA in table 1, the increase in the problem-focused coping group was ( $t=8.71, p<0.01$ ) the emotional-focused coping group was ( $t=36.53, p<0.01$ ), and the combination of problem-focused coping and emotional-focused coping ( $t=9.61, p<0.01$ ).

Overall, there found a difference at the level of significant, namely ( $f = 0.20, p > 0.05$ ) for pretest, so it can be said that the level of significance in the pretest was not significant. However, the posttest results obtained a value of ( $f=28.70, p<0.01$ ) or the significance level of the posttest results was significant.

Regarding the above results, the results found in the combination of both coping

strategies was better than that of problem-focused coping counseling, while the emotional-focused coping counseling was the best among all interventions in the way it increased the students' assertiveness. The effectiveness of emotional-focused coping has been confirmed by (Rutter, 2013; Compas, et al., 2014) because individuals are expected to pray more, be patient, and surrender. The success or failure of this coping will determine whether individuals' reaction to stress will decrease and finally meet all the desires.

Another step carried out was post-hoc test to decide the amount of differences in the increase in students' assertiveness. The results of this test are available as follows.

**Table 2.** The Results of Advanced Test Output (Post-Hoc Test)

Paired wise	MD	p
PFC – EFC	-50.57143	<0.05
PFC – (PFC + EFC)	-18.14286	<0.05
(PFC + EFC) - EFC	-32.42857	<0.05

Information:

PFC : *Problem Focused Coping*

EFC : *Emosional Focused Coping*

PFC + EFC : *Gabungan Problem Focused Coping dan Emosional Focused Coping.*

The above results indicated that all groups had significant difference in the effectiveness in the way they increased assertiveness. In details, the problem-focused coping with emotional-focused coping differed (MD=-50.57143). Meanwhile, the difference between the problem-focused coping group and the combination of both strategies was (MD=-18.14286). The last, the combination group with emotional-focused coping group differed (MD = -32.42857).

Assertiveness is a behavior that can be trained at several ages to reduce the risk of depression later in life. (Khan, 2012 study) in adolescents aged 18-21 years in Surabaya found that those who have high assertiveness will have a lower tendency to depression, and vice versa.

Children's assertiveness also needs to become a concern so that they have insight and

skills to socialize maximally. It is in line with a study by (Farida, 2006:23) who found that even though assertiveness is natural, it can be studied and developed.

Kids who have assertiveness can do self-development because it is a part of social skills which stimulates social skills adjustment behavior in terms of the elements of cognitive, behavior, emotional factors, and self-reliance (Milovanovic, Miladinovic, and Stojanovic, 2017). Similarly, (Tankamani, & Jalali, 2017). argues that assertiveness is a behavior that has cognitive and emotional aspects which are reflected in the individual's ability to deal with environmental demands which often can be stressful. This may happen because adolescents do not have the skills to express positive and

negative feelings honestly and straightforwardly, without anxiety or intimidation.

Emotional control can help individuals express their feelings in a good way. as (Silaen, 2015) states that the assertiveness of adolescents comes from controlling their emotions. When teenagers have low emotional regulation, their assertiveness will also be low, and vice versa.

The findings of this study have proved that the coping strategy group counseling with problem-focused coping and emotional-focused coping has been effective to increase assertiveness. However, the limitation of this study was in the absence of follow-up and less subjects of the study.

## CONCLUSION

The findings regarding the effectiveness of coping strategy group counseling with problem-focused coping and emotional-focused coping to increase assertiveness conclude that there found differences in the three interventions. Also, the combination of both coping strategies has contributed higher effectiveness than the problem-focused one, while the emotional-focused coping has been the most significant.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that further researchers use *Problem Focused Coping* and *Emotional Focused Coping* to provide interventions in order to improve the assertive behavior of SMK students. Finally, the next researcher should focus more on taking more.

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