



The effects of assertive communication training on communication skills of adolescents with online game users

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ABSTRACT

The behavior of playing online games has the risk of causing problems for adolescent developmental age, which is social relationship problems to addiction. Good communication skills can facilitate adolescents in assertive interpersonal relationships to prevent adolescents from online games problems. This study aim to determine the effect of assertive communication training on the communication skills of adolescents who play online games. Methods: This study applied a quasi-experimental pre-post test with a control group. The research respondents were selected using the stratified, proportional, and simple random sampling techniques. 76 adolescents comprised the respondents of this study, divided into two groups. The respondents' inclusion criteria were adolescents aged 15–16 years old who had played online games for at least the last 12 months. Results: The communication skills of adolescent in the intervention group has increased after implementing assertive communication training ($p < 0.05$), in contrast to this, the communication skills of adolescent in the control group has not increase after the implementation of assertive communication training ($p > 0.05$). Conclusion: Assertive communication training can be used as therapy in nursing services to improve communication skills and protect adolescents from the risk of social relationship problems to addiction due to online gaming activities.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of online games is currently experiencing a very rapid increase. Almost all teenagers have experience playing online games. Indonesia is a country with the highest number of teenage online game users in ASEAN in 2017 (Osborn, 2016). This condition requires special attention because the activity of playing online games has the risk of causing problems at adolescent developmental age, one of which is the problem of adolescent social relations with their environment.

The activity of playing online games can reduce adolescent social relations with the environment (King & Delfabbro, 2014). The motivation of adolescents to play online games is also influenced by the inability to make interpersonal relationships with the real environment, thus, making online games a place to meet their needs for interpersonal relationships (Lo, 2008). Online gaming activities can be an escape when adolescents are unable to make social relationships with the environment (Peeters et al., 2018). Research conducted it explains that adolescents can experience decreased communication skills if they often play or access online games (Yusuf et al., 2020). The habit of

playing online games in adolescents can have an impact on decreasing the quality of their social interactions, such as being unable to initiate interactions, tend to be passive when interacting with other people and unable to express their opinions or thoughts to others. Adolescents can experience decreased communication skills due to reduced interpersonal relationships as a result of playing online games (Ayu & Saragih, 2016).

Adolescents at age have been able to communicate interpersonal, but the ability of adolescents to communicate is not fully optimal because it is influenced by an inconsistent attitude towards what is conveyed, they do not really understand the prevailing cultural values, the ability to use body language when interacting and are less skilled in speaking (Kamaruzzaman, 2016). Communication skills are important for adolescents because they can maintain a positive attitude in interacting and convey information through mutual respect. Adolescents are also able to express emotional feelings appropriately, communicate appropriately and honestly, be able to express views of life and desire to realize what they want through good communication skills (Azis, 2015). Adolescents who are able to express feelings interpersonally can avoid harmful behavior (Arumsari, 2017). Good communication skills also make it easier for adolescents to use social support as a source of coping to prevent health problems caused by playing online games (Nurmagandi & Hamid, 2020).

Adolescents need to get more specific training to maintain and improve communication skills at their developmental age and to protect against social relationship problems caused by playing online games, one of which is assertive communication exercises. Assertive communication training are exercises to improve the ability to communicate assertively which are applied in groups in 6 meeting sessions. Assertive communication training enable adolescents to maintain a positive attitude in interacting and convey information through mutual respect and appreciation. Adolescents can show assertiveness in communicating through actions, body language and facial expressions (Widyastuti, 2017). Assertive communication training improve individual communication skills assertively (Omura et al., 2017). Assertive communication exercises can increase individual self-esteem which helps adolescents' ability to interact socially because they have good self-confidence (Lin et al., 2004).

Based on the description above, it is known that the use of online games in adolescents has the risk of reducing communication skills and causing adolescent interpersonal relationship problems. Studies show that assertive communication training can improve and maintain assertive communication skills, but research on the effect of assertive communication training on the skills of adolescent online game users has not been conducted. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of assertive communication training on the communication skills of adolescent online game users.

METHOD

This research used quantitative method, Quasi-experimental pre-and-post-test with control group. The intervention group received assertive communication training while the control group was left free to do their usual activities. The sample in this study amounted to 76 students from two public high schools in Morowali district,

Sulawesi, Indonesia. Determination of the sample in this study used stratified sampling, then proportional sampling and simple random sampling. The inclusion criteria for adolescents in this study were adolescents (15-16 years), having experience playing online games using their smartphone at least since the last 12 months. Informed consent was given to adolescents and parents as a form of consent to participate in assertive communication training.

Assertive communication training were conducted for 3 weeks which consisted of 3 stages, which were pre-test, practice and post-test. Assertive communication training consist of 6 meeting sessions containing exercises on the attitude of communicating assertively, passively and aggressively, training in listening and paying attention assertively at meeting/session 1, practicing expressing desires clearly assertively in meeting/session 2, compromising practice, negotiating and be patient assertively at the meeting/session 3, practice accepting differences and expressing opinions assertively at the meeting/session 4, training on giving effective and constructive criticism at the meeting/session 5, as well as monitoring and evaluating experiences and benefits during training at the meeting/session 6. Each session in assertive communication training was conducted by using the lecture method, roleplay, as well as independent training which was performed at home and evaluation of the independent training was conducted at the meeting in the next session. Each session of assertive communication training meetings was carried out for 60 minutes, the distance between the meetings between sessions was 2 days. Each meeting session was conducted face-to-face by following the COVID-19 pandemic prevention health protocol, which was by maintaining distance between participants in the group, using masks and washing hands before and after the implementation of therapy in each session.

Assertive communication training were conducted using workbooks and evaluation books, measuring communication skills in adolescents using a communication skills questionnaire derived from communication scale by Susan Barkman & Machtmes who has been translated language and tested the validity and reliability for use on adolescent respondents in Indonesia with a corrected item-total correlation value ≥ 0.3610 ($r = 0.363-0.771$) (Susan Barkman & Machtmes, 2002). This questionnaire is effective and has also been used to assess communication skills in adolescents after participating in a training program for the development of given communication skills (Eskicumali et al., 2020).

Univariate data analysis used central tendency and F test on data describing the characteristics of the respondent's age, gender, communication skills of adolescent respondents in the intervention group and communication skills of adolescent respondents in the control group. The bivariate data analysis used the F test to determine equality and the parametric dependent t test to assess changes in the communication skills of adolescent respondents before and after the implementation of the certification training exercise. The use of the dependent t test parametric test because the data describing the communication skills of adolescent respondents between the intervention group and the control group is normally distributed both before and after the implementation of assertive communication training.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Overview of respondent characteristics by age

Group	n	Mean	Min-Max	SD	SE	95% CI	p
Intervention	38	16,11	15-17	0,727	0,118	15,87-16,34	0,876
Control	38	16,05	15-17	0,733	0,119	15,81-16,29	

Table 2 Characteristics of adolescents by gender

Gender	Intervention (n=38)		Control (n=38)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	38	100,0	33	86,8	38	100
Female	0	0,00	5	13,2	38	100

Table 3 Description of change in communication skills of intervention group respondents and control group respondents before and after the implementation of assertive communication training

Skills	n	Mean	SD	SE	95% CI	p
Intervention Group						
Before	38	36,66	4,657	0,756	-2,071 - (-1,244)	0,0001
After		38,32	4,616	0,749		
Control Group						
Before	38	37,16	6,293	1,021	-0,153 - 0,680	0,208
After		36,89	6,550	1,063		

Respondents in the intervention group in this study were all male, while in the control group, there were 86.8% male respondents and 13.2% female respondents. Based on Table 1.2, male gender was the most dominant as a respondent in this study, this condition was supported by research which states that men are most dominant in playing online games compared to women. (Wittek et al., 2016). The average age of adolescent respondents in both groups was 16 years old, with the minimum age of respondents was 15 years, and the maximum age was 17 years. Based on the statistical test results of the test of homogeneity of variance in Table 1.1, the average age of adolescents in the intervention group and the control group was homogeneous with $p = 0.876$. ($p > 0.05$).

Based on Table 1.3, the average communication skills of respondents in the intervention group before the implementation of communication skills was 36.66, with a standard deviation of 4.657. After the assertive communication training, the average value of communication skills of adolescent respondents in the intervention group changed to 38.32, with a standard deviation of 4.616. There was a difference in the average communication skills of adolescent respondents in the intervention group before and after the implementation of assertive communication training, namely 1.658, with the interval coefficient of -2.071 - (-1.244). Based on the results of the statistical dependent t-test, there was an increase in the communication skills of adolescent respondents in the intervention group after implementing assertive communication training with $p = 0.0001$ ($p < 0.05$).

The average score of communication skills of the control group adolescent respondents in table 3.1 was 37.16. After the implementation of assertive communication training, the average communication skill score of the control group adolescent respondents was 36.89. The point of the control group adolescent respondents did not change, nor was a significant increase after the implementation of communication exercises in the intervention group based on the results of the dependent t-test with $p = 0.208$ ($p > 0.05$).

Assertive communication is an effort by adolescents to maintain a positive attitude in interpersonal relationships. Assertive communication is also useful in increasing communication effectiveness. The ability to communicate assertively can help individuals convey information clearly and there is mutual respect in communicating (Widyastuti, 2017). Assertive communication requires openness, honesty and positive thinking, without looking down on others. Assertive communication is expected to increase the desired needs met immediately, achieve the desired goals, environmental conditions that can positively affect each member, to reduce feelings of stress and increase self-confidence (Widyastuti, 2017). There are six techniques in assertive communication, which are being able to listen in order to understand and understand the problems that occur, being able to express expectations clearly, being able to pay attention to what is conveyed when interacting, being able to compromise and negotiate problem solving, being able to be persistent and patient and able provide effective and constructive criticism.

The assertive communication training provided were able to improve the communication skills of adolescent respondents in the intervention group, in contrast to the communication skills of the control group adolescents who did not change after the implementation of therapy because the control group adolescents did not receive assertive communication training therapy. The communication skills of the control group adolescent respondents did not experience a significant improvement after the implementation of assertive communication training because the control group adolescent respondents did not receive any intervention and were only left free to do their activities. Based on the results of the research when the post test was conducted, it was known that the ability of the control group adolescent respondents had decreased. This could be influenced by the increase in the activity of teenagers who played online games at home due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Virtual school from home can make teenagers feel bored and make online games a diversion. This

condition is in line with research which states that excessive online gaming activities can reduce interpersonal relationship skills (Putri, 2018; Yusuf et al., 2020).

The improvement in communication skills that occurred in the intervention group adolescent respondents after the implementation of assertive communication exercises is in line with other researched which explained that individual communication skills can be improved using assertive training (Al'Ain & Mulyana, 2013). Adolescents who have aggressive behavior can improve their communication skills through assertive communication training (Yunalia et al., 2019). The same research was also said that assertive training can improve adolescent social skills (Prabowo & Asni, 2018).

Assertive communication training are conducted in the form of groups because the implementation of therapy in the form of groups can increase adolescent self-confidence, adolescents feel supported and can be a place to exchange information (Putra & Pohan, 2018). The effectiveness of assertive communication training is also supported by the training methods used, which are the lecture method, roleplay and independent training. The lecture method is conducted by the therapist to inform about the training topic to be trained at the meeting, the lecture method is used effectively to share information or knowledge about communication skills with adolescent respondents to make it easier to understand (Sari, 2019). The next method is roleplay, where the therapist provides an example by directly practicing the topic of exercise with one of the teenage respondents, then all teenage respondents are asked to do roleplay directly with other teenage respondents. The use of the roleplay method in assertive communication training is considered effective in increasing adolescent respondents' understanding of the assertive communication training provided so that it has an impact on the improvement of communication skills of adolescent respondents. It is in line with other research which states that the roleplay learning method can improve adolescent students' understanding of learning materials given (Yustian et al., 2018). The next method is independent training, which is after the implementation of the training session, teenage respondents were asked to do independent training based on previously trained topics at home, school and their environment and an evaluation will be conducted to assess the respondents' ability to master the exercises given in the next session. This condition can make teenagers always practice or apply the exercises that are given at home instead of having to spend their spare time playing online games.

The assertive communication training given to adolescent respondents in the intervention group consisted of 6 meeting sessions, training session 1 was an exercise in assertiveness when communicating and the ability to pay attention and listen when communicating. Meeting session 2 was training to clearly convey wishes when communicating. Meeting session 3 was training on the ability to compromise, negotiate, be persistent and patient. Meeting session 4 was training to convey and receive opinions assertively. Meeting session 5 was training to provide effective and constructive criticism, and meeting session 6 was evaluation of benefits and implementation process.

Exercise the ability to express wishes, namely to train how to express wishes. One of the purposes of communication is to state or express intentions. Expressing or expressing wishes can be a means for individuals to express their emotional feelings (Liliweri, 2015). Emotional feelings conveyed or expressed can be done verbally or non-verbally, such as feelings of sympathy, sadness, affection,

care, and anger (Handayani, 2011). Adolescents can fulfill their desires through help from others because they can express or express desires clearly (Muhith & Siyoto, 2018).

Exercising the ability to pay attention clearly and carefully to what is conveyed by others aims to provide youth with ease, especially in solving a problem or task because they can understand well the information from others (Liliweri, 2015). It is essential to practice attitudes or ways of negotiating and compromising when communicating with others. The negotiation skills possessed by adolescents enable them to find alternative solutions to the problems faced and the ability to produce win-win solutions when both parties cannot decide on alternative solutions to the problem faced without harming both parties. This ability needs to develop because better communication skills will have an impact on the ability to negotiate and compromise (Kausyar, 2001).

Adequate negotiation skills can make adolescents find ways of solving problems because the function of negotiation is to find a middle ground for two interests without the need for conflict or division (Utami, 2012). Compromise can also be a way to find other satisfying alternatives to two or more individuals who are arguing or disputing (Sridasweni & Yusuf, 2017). Persistence needs to build in maintaining opinion when communicating. Adolescents who carry out interpersonal communication without having a patient attitude and are persistent can cause problems or losses. The kinships created when interacting with other people can lead to the creation of harmonious relationships.

Adolescents can maintain a positive attitude when communicating with others through assertive communication. Another effectiveness obtained by adolescents with assertive communication skills is to provide ease of interaction through mutual respect (Widyastuti, 2017). Communication skills can create a positive social environment so that it has a positive effect on reducing feelings of stress and increasing individual self-confidence (Widyastuti, 2017). Adolescents can connect and understand interpersonal through communication (Townsend, 2014). Through adequate communication skills, adolescents can also actively be involved in fulfilling the family socialization function, namely the interaction relationship between family members (Friedman, 2010). Adolescents can establish a more intense communication relationship with family members, which have a positive effect on the moral development and character of adolescents (Situmorang et al., 2016).

Good interpersonal relationships can be a protective factor against health problems caused by playing online games (Fumero et al., 2020). The social environment can be a source of coping for adolescents who play online games. Adolescents can reduce the risk of psychosocial problems if they are involved in a positive and constructive social or community environment (García-Poole et al., 2019). The social community can control and supervise the activities of adolescents from deviant attitudes or behaviors due to playing online games (Wichstrøm et al., 2019).

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The limitation in this study is that the research was conducted in a COVID-19 pandemic situation, so that all activities of teenage respondents were only conducted at home. This condition causes the use of online games to increase so that it has an impact on the effectiveness of the training given. The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic also

makes the implementation of therapy using the Covid-19 protocol, thereby affecting the quality of roleplay or independent training applied at home, because teenage respondents must maintain a safe distance in doing roleplay.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Assertive communication exercises can improve adolescent communication skills in interpersonal relationships with social environments. Well-created interpersonal relationships can provide support for adolescents to express positive emotional feelings which can protect against psychosocial problems, especially as a result of playing online games. Good interpersonal relationships can also be used as a source of social support and supervision provided by the environment for adolescents who play online games to prevent the risk of addiction.

Assertive communication exercises can be a therapy in nursing services to improve adolescent communication skills to prevent the risk of social relationship problems to online game addiction. Nursing applications can also be implemented in families as the closest social environment for adolescents by increasing the fulfillment of family functions, especially socialization functions so that families can be a source of social support and supervision of adolescent activities in playing online games.

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ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Researchers have been declared to have passed the ethical test through a certificate number SK-68/UN2.F12.D1.2.1/ETIK 2020 by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Nursing, University of Indonesia and have passed the competency test so that they are eligible as a therapist in conducting assertive communication training interventions from the Psychiatric Nursing Specialist education program, Faculty of Nursing, University of Indonesia.

Conflict of Interest Statement

There was no conflict of interest in the writing until the publication of this article.

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