



THE EFFECT OF ASSERTIVE SKILLS TRAINING AND THE ANTI-BULLYING SNAKES AND LADDERS GAME ON INCREASING ASSERTIVE ATTITUDES IN EFFORTS TO PREVENT BULLYING AT SMPN 12 BENGKULU CITY

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Abstract

Bullying is a deviant behavior that often occurs during early adolescence, especially in school environments. Its impact is not only physical but also affects students' psychological well-being, such as lowering self-esteem and increasing anxiety. Assertive behavior and the use of the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game can help improve students' attitudes toward bullying and create a safe, positive school environment. This study aims to determine the effect of assertive skills training and the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game on improving assertive attitudes as an effort to prevent bullying at SMPN 12 Bengkulu City. This study employed a pre-experimental design using the one-group pretest–posttest method. The sample was selected through a stratified random sampling technique, involving a total of 57 participants. The instruments used included a questionnaire to assess assertive attitudes and an observation sheet for letter content. Data were analyzed using the Wilcoxon test. The analysis results showed a p-value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference in students' assertive behavior before and after the intervention. Assertive training and the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game were found to have a positive effect on improving students' assertive attitudes as an effort to prevent bullying.

Keywords: Bullying, Assertive Attitude, Assertive Training, Snakes and Ladders Game, Adolescents

Presented at the 5th
Bengkulu International
Conference on Health
(B- ICON),
Bengkulu-Indonesia,
October 28-29th, 2025

Published:
December 31st, 2025
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e-ISSN: 2986-027X

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is a form of deviant social behavior consciously carried out by individuals or groups to harm others through verbal, physical, or psychological means, resulting in victims feeling powerless, traumatized, and distressed (Sutriyawan *et al.*, 2020). According to data from the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2021, among 40 countries reporting bullying cases, Indonesia recorded the highest prevalence in the ASEAN region, at 84% (Novitasari *et al.* 2023).

In Indonesia, cases of violence against children continue to increase. Data from the Online Information System for the Protection of Women and Children (SIMFONI-PPA) show that from January to February 2024, there were 1,993 reported cases of violence against children. Meanwhile, the National Commission for Child Protection (Komnas PA) reported 3,547 cases throughout 2023. The Indonesian Child Protection

Commission (KPAI) also recorded 2,355 cases of child protection violations from January to August 2023, of which 861 occurred in educational settings. Among these, 87 were bullying victims and 236 involved physical or psychological violence (Novitasari *et al.* 2023).

Bullying has psychological impacts on victims, such as anxiety, social withdrawal, and even depression (Ismaningsih *et al.*, 2022). Early prevention efforts can be achieved through character building and the development of positive social skills. Assertive behavior is an individual's ability to express thoughts, feelings, and needs honestly and firmly without harming others (Alfariza *et al.*, 2023). Previous studies have shown positive behavioral changes in bullying before and after assertiveness interventions (Herman *et al.*, 2020). A scoping review also found that assertive therapy significantly reduces bullying behavior and its psychological impacts, such as anxiety, while increasing self-esteem (Yosep *et al.*, 2024).

Game-based learning can enhance student engagement, promote active learning, and develop essential social skills (Alotaibi, 2024). The educational snakes and ladders game has been shown to positively influence students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in preventing bullying (Maria *et al.*, 2021). The high prevalence of bullying in educational environments highlights the urgent need for preventive measures through educational and engaging interventions.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with a pre-experimental design using a one-group pretest–posttest model. The research was conducted at SMPN 12 Bengkulu City over a period of ten days, from March 10 to March 19, 2025. The study population consisted of all seventh-grade students at SMPN 12 Bengkulu City, totaling 132 students across four classes. The sample comprised 57 students selected through stratified random sampling based on class grouping. The inclusion criteria included students who were in good health and willing to participate as respondents. The instruments used in this study were an assertive behavior questionnaire and a letter observation sheet. The assertive attitudes questionnaire was adapted from research by Imam Ramdhani, which was originally developed by Fensterheim and Baer. It consisted of 43 validated and reliable statement items (Ramdhani, 2018). This study obtained ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of Poltekkes Kemenkes Bengkulu, with Ethical Clearance Number: KEPK.BKL/130/03/2025. The research began with obtaining informed consent from students who were selected as respondents. A pretest was then administered before the intervention to measure the students' initial assertive attitudes.

The intervention was conducted over two days and consisted of eight sessions. These sessions were designed based on the assertive skills training model developed by Ainiyah *et al.*, (2020) and combined with the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game adapted from (Aneke, 2020). On the first day, students

received material and training related to bullying and assertiveness. The second day focused on practical activities through the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game. Each square in the game contained illustrations of different bullying situations and types. Students were asked to determine the appropriate response, select and attach a reaction card, and then express their response verbally. Data obtained from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using the non-parametric Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test, as the data were not normally distributed. This test was employed to determine the differences in students' assertive abilities before and after the intervention, which consisted of assertive skills training and the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game. Data processing was carried out using SPSS software.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table 1. Distribution of the Mean Assertive Attitude Scores of Respondents
Before and After the Intervention

Variable		Value			
Assertive Attitudes	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Ci for mean 95%
PreTest	131,72	18,309	99	161	126,86-136,58
PostTest	155,42	20,526	118	206	149,97-160,87

Based on Table 1, the mean score of respondents' assertive attitudes before the intervention was 131.72, with a standard deviation of 18.309, a minimum score of 99, and a maximum score of 161. Meanwhile, after the intervention, the mean score increased to 155.42, with a standard deviation of 20.526, a minimum score of 118, and a maximum score of 206.

Table 2. The Effect of Assertive Skills Training and the Anti-Bullying Snakes and Ladders
Game on Improving Assertive Attitudes in Efforts to Prevent Bullying

Variable	N	Mean (Min-Max)	Z	p value
Assertive Behavior				
Pre-Test	57	131,72(99-161)		
Post Test	57	155,42(118-206)	-6.511 ^b	0,001

**Uji Wilcoxon*

Based on the data analysis, the mean score of assertive behavior increased from 131.72 before the intervention to 155.42 after the intervention. The statistical test results showed a z-value of -6.511 with a significance level of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference in students' assertive behavior

before and after the intervention. Therefore, it can be concluded that assertive skills training and the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game had a significant effect on improving assertive behavior as an effort to prevent bullying.

Discussion

A moderate level of assertiveness is characterized by unstable assertive behavior, susceptibility to environmental influences, and an inability to consistently defend personal rights (Alberti & Emmons, 2017). In addition, Fensterheim & Baer, (1975) stated that adolescents with a moderate level of assertive behavior tend to experience ambivalence in expressing their feelings, resulting in suboptimal assertive expression. Conventional learning methods that do not involve active student participation also hinder the development of assertive communication skills (Lepe-Salazar *et al.*, 2024). Adolescents often struggle to express emotions and opinions appropriately due to the lack of well-developed assertive skills (Yosep *et al.*, 2024).

Assertiveness training helps participants gain a better understanding of personal rights, social boundaries, and appropriate ways to express opinions without harming others. Assertiveness also improves alongside self-awareness and empathy, as individuals learn to understand both their own and others' feelings, enabling them to respond to social situations appropriately and confidently (Yosep *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, the snakes and ladders game creates a dynamic and engaging learning environment that captures students' attention and increases enthusiasm. As a result, participants become more motivated, actively engaged, and better able to express themselves (Sabila *et al.*, 2021).

Assertive training enhances students' ability to express opinions assertively, refuse negative peer pressure, and demonstrate confidence in facing social challenges (Ramadhani *et al.*, 2023). Character education using the snakes and ladders game can also help prevent bullying (Aneke, 2020). Furthermore, the "Healthy Mind" educational snakes and ladders game has been shown to positively influence students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to bullying prevention (Maria *et al.*, 2021). The use of game-based assertiveness promotion media significantly improves assertive behavior among secondary school students (Lepe-Salazar *et al.*, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Assertive skills training combined with the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game proved effective in enhancing students' assertive attitudes as an effort to prevent bullying in the school environment. Through this intervention, students gained a deeper understanding of assertiveness, were able to identify various forms of bullying, and practiced expressing assertive responses in an interactive and enjoyable way.

It is recommended that schools and educators integrate assertive skills training combined with the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game into school counseling and character education programs. This approach can foster a more positive and respectful school climate by enhancing students' assertive communication skills and awareness in preventing bullying behaviors. For nursing professionals, particularly in the fields of mental health and community nursing, the incorporation of assertive training and the anti-bullying snakes and ladders game into school-based mental health promotion initiatives is strongly encouraged. This intervention may contribute to the prevention of bullying and strengthen students' psychological resilience in the school setting. Future research is advised to employ larger and more diverse sample sizes, extend the intervention period, and include control groups to improve the robustness and generalizability of findings. Moreover, utilizing direct observational methods to assess assertive behavior is recommended to obtain richer data that more accurately represent students' real-life social interactions.

Acknowledgements

The researcher extends sincere appreciation to all parties who have provided support and assistance throughout the implementation of this study, particularly to the respondents, the school, and the entire research team who actively contributed to the success and smooth execution of this research.

Declaration of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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